

# 2023 Activity Report

We Stand for Wildlife®





**The Wildlife Conservation Society European Union Office (WCS EU)** is a Belgian NGO based in Brussels, affiliated to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a global conservation organisation with field programmes in more than 55 countries across the globe.

Learn more: [brussels.wcs.org](https://brussels.wcs.org)

## WCS EU Mission

WCS EU works at the nexus of biodiversity and development cooperation to further our mission to save wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. WCS EU provides technical, scientifically-informed inputs to government policy-makers and other key stakeholders to influence the development cooperation and environmental policies and programmes of the European Union, and the Belgian government. WCS EU raises awareness and fosters dialogue, emphasising the urgent need to protect biodiversity as a foundation for sustainable development and a healthy planet, which supports agriculture, fisheries, food security, water access, and climate resilience.

WCS EU is committed to working to improve the health of ecosystems and the wildlife they support, to benefit communities, in line with the commitments made under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Achieving sustainable economic development and flourishing human development, depends on a healthy and resilient environment. Biodiversity loss, particularly in vulnerable regions, fuels conflict, displacement, and migration pressures, undermining stability. WCS EU supports WCS country programmes, to protect biodiversity, improve ecosystem health and resilience, and benefit local communities over the long-term, including in many least developed countries. WCS acts as a technical and science-based partner to governments, including through the delivery of rights-based conservation programmes in both terrestrial and marine environments.

Learn more: [www.wcs.org](https://www.wcs.org)



# Policy and Visibility



# INFLUENCING EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

## GBF Technical Workshop

WCS EU, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, The Nature Conservancy, and the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas organised a Technical Workshop on 'Implementing the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF): Making Target 3 work for People and Nature' on 15th May at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels. [Read more](#)



Speakers and the audience at the GBF workshop in Brussels

## EU Global Gateway Dialogue Platform

WCS EU participated in the first meeting of the EU Global Gateway Dialogue Platform on 24th October, which was opened by EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen. WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens spoke on the importance of investing in the conservation and restoration of ecosystems with direct benefits for the economy and local communities.

[Read more](#)



First Global Gateway Dialogue Platform meeting held in Brussels

## EU Multiannual Financial Framework

On 31st August, WCS EU contributed to a public consultation on the mid-term review and revision of the EU's 2021-2027 long-term budget, calling among others on the EU to invest further in the protection of high-integrity ecosystems, not only for biodiversity but also for the benefits to people related to health, food, agriculture, and social and economic development. [Read more](#)

# HEALTH

## One Health Summit

The One Health Summit took place on 21st March in Brussels and brought together global experts to discuss the importance of One Health. Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director of Health, highlighted the need to stop environmental encroachment and degradation to prevent pathogen spillovers. [Read more](#)



Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer speaking on a panel at the One Health Summit

## New EU Parliament Resolution on Pandemics

On 17th July, WCS issued a statement welcoming a new European Parliament resolution on 'COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned and Recommendations for the Future', which sets out a roadmap to better prevent, prepare, and respond to future health crises, including pandemics of zoonotic origin. [Read more](#)



## 'Belgian One Health Vision' Final Workshop

The Belgian PREZODE Expert Group with support from the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, and Sciensano held a last workshop on 6th October to discuss the development of a national 'One World One Health Vision' for Belgium, with a focus on the emergence of diseases of zoonotic origin. WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens shared WCS's positions on One Health. [Read more](#)



Speakers at the Belgian 'One Health Vision' Final Workshop

## World Health Summit

The World Health Summit (WHS) took place on 15-17 October in Berlin, Germany. WCS health and policy experts participated in the summit to ensure that nature remains a top priority on the global health agenda and to contribute to discussions on the One Health approach.

[Read more](#)



Left to right: Arnaud Goessens (WCS EU), Zakia Khattabi, Minister of Climate, Environment, Sustainable Development and Green Deal of Belgium; Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer (WCS), and Eveline DeCoster, Environmental Advisor to Minister Khattabi

## WHO Pandemic Agreement

WCS participated in the seventh meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB 7) to draft and negotiate a convention, agreement or other international instrument under the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, which was held from 6-10 November at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. [Read more](#)



WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens speaking at the INB 7 Plenary Session

## DG SANTE's One Health Conference

WCS participated in the 'One Health for All, All for One Health' conference organised by the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) of the European Commission on 13th November in Luxembourg. Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director of Health, called for a systems approach that acknowledges the vital interconnectedness between humans, other animals, and the broader ecosystem.

[Read more](#)



Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director of Health speaking at the EU 'One Health' conference in Luxembourg



## OTHER ISSUES

### Biodiversity Spring Market

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform hosted a Biodiversity Spring Market on 22nd March, which represented a unique opportunity to learn about biodiversity in Belgium and beyond, and to meet other biodiversity actors from across Europe in an informal setting. WCS EU held a stand to present WCS's global conservation work, including the SWM Programme. [Read more](#)

### IUCN Belgian Members Day

On 8th May, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in a panel at the first Belgian IUCN Members Day at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. He presented WCS's global conservation and policy work, and discussed how IUCN can use the power of science to feed into global policy and the major challenges for implementing policy for better conservation. [Read more](#)

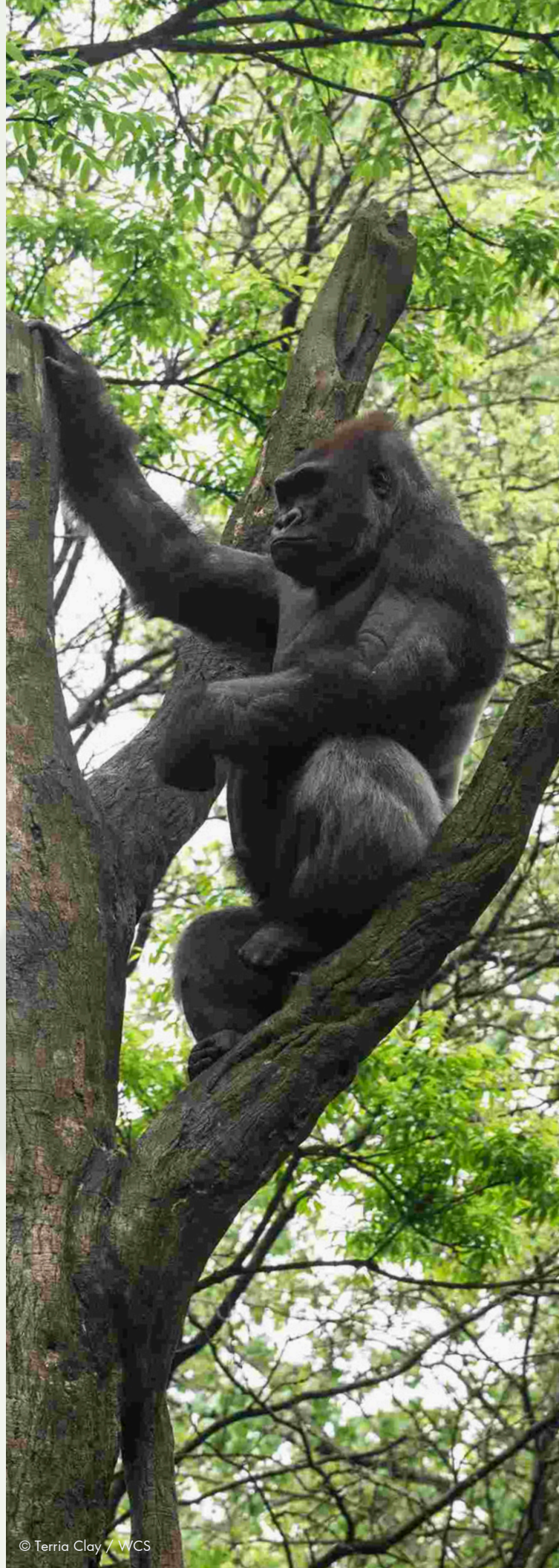


Left to right: Sonia Peña Moreno, Chris Mahon, Boris Erg, Arnaud Goessens (WCS EU)

### EU Restoration Law

In September, WCS EU co-signed a joint statement, together with 200 other civil society organisations, on the new EU Restoration Law calling upon all EU Member States, Members of the European Parliament, and the European Commission to ensure that ambitious provisions are included in the final text of the law.

[Read more](#)





# Supporting Field Implementation through Funding and Partnerships



# Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme

The Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme is a major international initiative that aims to improve the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife in forest, savannah and wetland ecosystems. It is being funded by the European Union with co-funding from the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) and the French Development Agency (AFD). The initiative is coordinated by a dynamic consortium of four partners, namely the FAO, CIFOR-ICRAF, CIRAD, and WCS. The SWM Programme is developing innovative, collaborative, and scalable new approaches to conserve wild animals and protect ecosystems, whilst at the same time improving the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities who depend on these resources. Projects are being piloted and tested with governments and communities in 16 participating countries. [Read more](#)

WCS EU staff, Caroline Abid, Chief of Party SWM Programme, Guillaume Baralle, SWM Technical Assistant, and Arnaud Goessens, Associate Director of EU Policy (SWM R1 Focal Point), are engaged in the direct implementation of the SWM Programme by WCS (with which we are affiliated), through WCS's country programme offices in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo (RoC), Madagascar, and Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In 2023, SWM entered a scaling-up phase with the development of its second phase. The Programme participated in the Douala NaturAfrica meeting and Caroline took part in a pivotal meeting in Bangkok to design the SWM Asia Programme, expanding the initiative's scope to include the One Health approach and legal analysis activities.

- **DRC:** Guillaume undertook two field missions to support programme implementation and represent SWM at the Site Steering Committee alongside DRC officials. The update process for the 'directives d'accès aux ressources naturelles'—rules governing community use of natural resources in the Okapi Wildlife Reserve—was initiated with SWM's guidance. A grievance redress mechanism was also developed and launched within the reserve, a first for protected areas in DRC. Additionally, the Legal Hub for the DRC was completed and published.
- **Congo:** Leveraging SWM's analysis, the Congo programme developed a strategic plan to align wild meat activities with broader future initiatives.
- **Madagascar:** Five community-based organisations supported by SWM renewed their legal agreements to manage community areas within the green belt of the Makira Nature Park. Guillaume supported the field team during a mission in June.
- **PNG:** The Danbagl Conservation Deed was signed, representing another significant milestone in community-led conservation efforts in PNG.

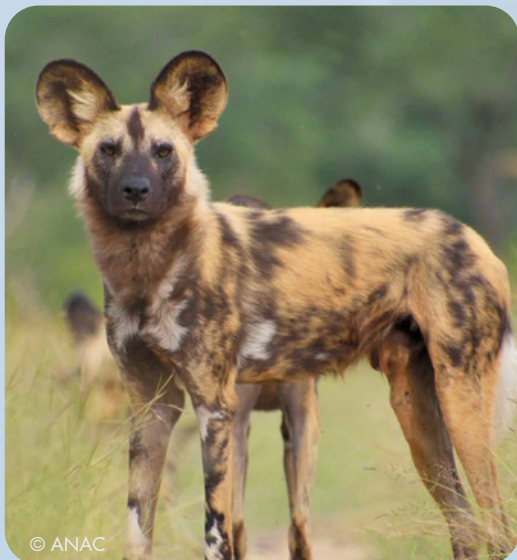




## Niassa Special Reserve (NSR) Programme

The Niassa Special Reserve (NSR) in northern Mozambique is one of Africa's largest protected areas. It is of paramount importance to the local communities and the Mozambique government to secure viable biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Reserve. The EU-funded initiative 'Disrupting Illicit Supply Chains of Wildlife in the Niassa Special Reserve through Law Enforcement and Community Engagement', implemented between 2021 and 2024, aims to ensure a healthy, functioning and resilient ecosystem in the Reserve. WCS EU staff, Arnaud Goessens, Associate Director of EU Policy, is engaged in the implementation of activities as a sub-contracted partner of WCS. [Read more](#)

The European Commission, the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and WCS EU organised a conference on 'Scaling up EU Impact to Combat Wildlife Trafficking - Renewing commitment through the revised EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking 2022 - 2027' on 21st September in Brussels. The event presented best practices and lessons learned from several WCS initiatives, including from the EU-funded initiative 'Disrupting Illicit Supply Chains of Wildlife in the Niassa Special Reserve through Law Enforcement and Community Engagement', and panelists discussed challenges and opportunities to scale up impact to tackle wildlife trafficking, in line with the revised EU Action Plan to tackle wildlife trafficking. [Read more](#)





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