



2025 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

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

Policy and Visibility



EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

IUCN Congress

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in the IUCN World Conservation Congress, which took place from 9 to 15 October 2025 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in a hybrid format with over 10,000 participants from 189 countries. WCS EU is an active member of IUCN, and is pleased to see the adoption of a strong 20-year vision, a 4-year program for IUCN, several motions addressing key emerging conservation challenges, and a powerful Abu Dhabi Call to Action.



Aymeric Roussel (DG INTPA) and Emmanuel Barde Elisha (ANI) at the IUCN Congress.

We joined an inspiring session organized by the B4Life Facility / AGRECO, titled 'NaturAfrica: Empowering Communities for Thriving Landscapes'. WCS's Africa Policy Director, Michel Masozera, stressed the importance of investing in areas which are still high in ecological integrity – because of the high benefits they bring for biodiversity, carbon, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities. Many of the planet's remaining, intact landscapes are in Africa but are still under threat. [Read more](#)

Next EU Budget

On 2nd May, WCS EU submitted a response to the EU Public Consultation on the "EU's next long-term budget (MFF) – EU funding for external action", calling for the EU to increase biodiversity financing in the next EU external funding / international cooperation budget, to ensure it meets its international obligations under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and to enhance investment in nature and biodiversity under the Global Gateway initiative. [Read more](#)

COMBATTING DEFORESTATION

Climate-Health Roundtable

On 29th April, WCS EU participated in a roundtable discussion on "The Climate-Health Nexus: A Geopolitical and Financial Imperative", organised by the Africa-Europe Foundation and The Elders Foundation. The discussion centered on how the Africa-Europe partnership can drive a step-change in climate-health-biodiversity cooperation. During her intervention, WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh emphasised that the climate and health nexus is underpinned by biodiversity and ecosystem health which are fundamentally important for climate mitigation and adaptation, and for human and animal health. [Read more](#)



Participants at the roundtable organised by the Africa-Europe Foundation and The Elders Foundation.

Five Great Forests of Mesoamerica

On 20th July, MEP César Luená, a member of the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, visited Costa Rica and observed work being undertaken through the EU-funded 5 Great Forests of Mesoamerica Initiative. Through EU funding, WCS collaborates with governments, civil society, researchers, and Indigenous Peoples to reverse deforestation and transform food and land-use systems in ways that address climate change, conserve biodiversity, and improve local livelihoods. [Read more](#)



César Luená, Laura Valverde (SINAC), and Jimmy Barrantes (CRWF), during a visit to Los Quetzales National Park.

EU-LAC Panel on Deforestation

On 19th November, WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh participated in a panel discussion "From the Amazon to Europe: Deforestation, Planetary Health & the Future of the EU-Latin America Partnership", organized by the Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal). During her intervention, Janice highlighted the importance of ecologically intact forests and the need for EU policy and funding support.

COUNTER-WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Open Letter on the Wildlife Trade

On 13th May, NGOs sent a letter to Jessika Roswall, EU Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy, calling for actions to address the threats posed by wildlife trade and trafficking to biodiversity, animal welfare, and public health. EU leadership will be essential to drive the urgently needed transformative changes to our relationship with nature – for the benefit of animals, ecosystems, and people alike.

[Read more](#)

EMPACT Policy Cycle

On 27th May, NGOs urged the EU and its Member States to support the inclusion of wildlife trafficking as an area of focus under the environmental crime priority of the next European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) policy cycle. If this issue is overlooked, the effective implementation and enforcement of relevant EU legislation and policies will be jeopardised, weakening the EU's international commitment to fight wildlife trafficking and protect biodiversity. [Read more](#)

EU Study on Positive List of Pets

On 24th July, WCS EU submitted comments on the "Interim Findings – EU Study on Positive List of Pets". We welcome the study, which presents a useful and thorough overview of the issues at hand, and we outline a number of concerns regarding several assumptions underlying the study. [Read more](#)

Exotic Pet Trade

On 28th October, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens and WCS's Dr. Sue Lieberman, WCS Vice President of International Policy, participated in a workshop on 'Reframing the Exotic Pet Trade in Europe – Developing Effective Science-Based Demand Reduction Interventions' organised by the European Commission in Brussels.



Participants at the workshop on 'Reframing the Exotic Pet Trade in Europe'.

CITES CoP20

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens joined the WCS delegation to the 20th meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP20) from 24th November to 5th December in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Among several notable engagements, we co-organized a stakeholder meeting with the European Parliament delegation to present our key priorities and recommendations as well as to discuss ways to further advance the implementation of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking. [Read more](#)



NGO representatives and the European Parliament's delegation at CoP20.

"Stolen Wildlife" Report

In October, WCS, ProWildlife, Humane World for Animals, IFAW, and FOUR PAWS, published a report "Stolen Wildlife: The EU's role as destination for wildlife traffickers – an update". The report reveals how legal loopholes in EU law enable a flourishing trade in illegally-sourced wildlife, and highlights how demand generated by the EU's exotic pet trade contributes to wildlife trafficking. [Read more](#)

HEALTH

Open Letter on One Health

On 23rd January, WCS EU coordinated with 41 organisations, including environmental NGOs, conservation groups, youth associations, research institutes, and foundations, on a letter calling for the EU to strengthen the environmental pillar in the One Health approach and to develop an ambitious EU One Health Strategy that sets out concrete and bold actions that will truly reduce the risks of pathogen spillovers and future epidemics and pandemics of zoonotic origin. [Read more](#)

Belgian One Health Conference

On 22-23 January, WCS participated in the Belgian One Health Conference "Ecosystems in the Balance: Supporting Future Policy & Research" hosted by the Belgian One Health network, the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, and Sciensano in Brussels. Dr. Stephane Ostrowski, WCS Senior Advisor of Temperate Asia Region & Associate Director of Wildlife Health Program, presented on "One Health in Action: Balancing Livelihoods, Livestock, and Ecosystems Health in Central Asia", highlighting the impact of ongoing and unprecedented decline in biodiversity on the risk of transmission of infectious diseases. [Read more](#)

European Economic and Social Committee

On 24th March, WCS participated in an Expert Hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on "Healthy Planet for Healthy People: Towards a Comprehensive 'One Health' Approach". Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director for Health, participated in the hearing, referencing the 'Manhattan Principles', which underscores WCS's long-standing commitment to a holistic systems-based approach to health and preventing zoonotic disease emergence, along with the protection of ecological integrity to benefit humans, their domesticated animals and the foundational biodiversity that supports life on Earth. [Read more](#)

WHO Pandemic Agreement

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens continued to engage with European Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) representatives regarding the development of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Agreement on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response to inform the process and advance WCS priorities on One Health and Pandemic Prevention at the Source. On 20th May, WCS issued a statement welcoming the adoption of this historic agreement. [Read more](#)

Animalhealth Europe Annual Conference

On 3rd July, WCS participated in Animalhealth Europe's Annual Conference in Brussels. This year's event focused on the timely and critical theme of "Preventing Disease X", highlighting the often overlooked but vital role that animal health and veterinary services play in preventing future epidemics and pandemics, and safeguarding global health.

Dr. Chris Walzer was featured on a panel, discussing the need for better coordination at the animal-human-wildlife interface, with more integrated data sharing, and greater awareness-raising on the drivers behind disease spillovers. [Read more](#)

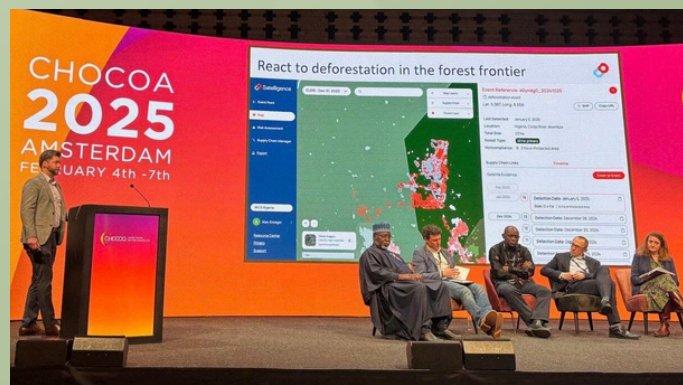


Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director of Health, speaking at the conference.

MARKETS & BUSINESS

Amsterdam Sustainable Cocoa Conference

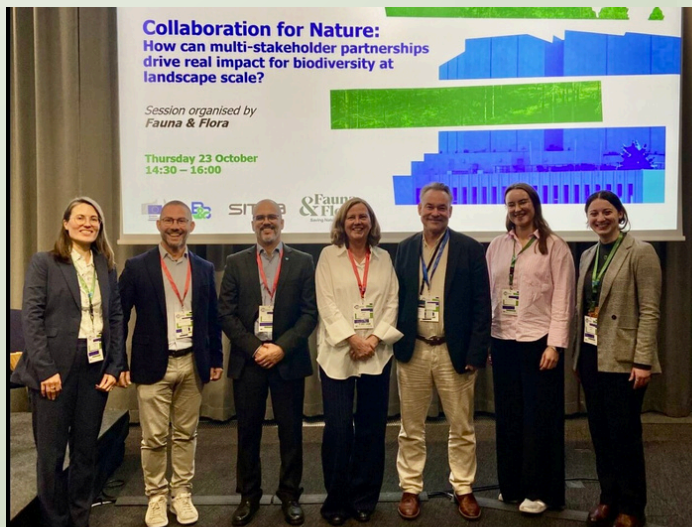
On 6th February, WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh spoke at the Amsterdam Sustainable Cocoa Conference, providing insights on the WCS's engagement on sustainable commodities. The Amsterdam Sustainable Cocoa Conference brings together a diverse range of stakeholders to present evidence and foster discussions on key topics shaping the future of sustainable cocoa and chocolate. [Read more](#)



Speakers at the Amsterdam Sustainable Cocoa Conference.

European Business and Nature Summit

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens and WCS's Hugo Costa, Director of Business & Biodiversity Impact, participated in the European Business and Nature Summit (EBNS), which took place on 23-24 October in Helsinki, Finland. WCS EU is proud to be a supporting partner of EBNS. Hugo presented in a session on "Collaboration for Nature: How multi-stakeholder partnerships can drive real impact for biodiversity at landscape scale", organised by Fauna & Flora. [Read more](#)



Speakers at the session on "Collaboration for Nature" at EBNS 2025.

Article in Forbes Belgium

On 22nd October, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens published an article in Forbes Belgium on "Innovative Financial Solutions for Nature - Unlocking the Potential of Private Capital", discussing high potential financial tools, including nature credits, blended finance mechanisms, and debt-for-nature swaps.

Read the article (in [French](#) or [English](#))

MARINE CONSERVATION

European Oceans Pact

On 17th February, WCS EU submitted a response to the EU Call for Evidence on "The European Oceans Pact".

Our response called for the EU to scale up blue economy investments in partner countries under the Global Gateway funding initiative, among others. The response provided four concrete, evidence-based recommendations to drive meaningful change in ocean conservation and governance. [Read the response](#)

On 12th May, WCS EU coordinated with other NGOs on a letter to Costas Kadis, EU Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, calling for the inclusion of clear and ambitious provisions under the 'European Oceans Pact' for the financing required to support effective and lasting ocean conservation efforts. [Read more](#)

UN Ocean Conference

In the run-up to the third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) WCS EU and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) hosted a high-level event on 22nd May in Brussels to build momentum towards achieving political commitments at UNOC3 that contribute to safeguarding climate-resilient, high-integrity coral reefs for achieving global biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development goals. Speakers included Ambassadors to the EU from Brazil, Samoa and the Philippines, and the European Commission. [Read more](#)

WCS EU's Camilla Davila joined the WCS delegation at UNOC3, which took place from 9-13 June 2025 in Nice, France. The conference marked a significant step forward in mobilising political and financial commitments for ocean action, spotlighting the need for inclusive and equitable ocean protection, with a particular focus on climate-vulnerable coastal regions. [Read more](#)

Ocean-Climate Nexus

On 10th December, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in a workshop "Coordinating Ocean-Climate Efforts in the European Union", organized by the Ocean & Climate Platform (OCP) in Brussels. The event provided an important opportunity to inform the process, engage with key French and EU stakeholders, and advance WCS priorities on the ocean-climate agenda at the EU level.

[Read more](#)



Participants of the workshop 'Coordinating Ocean-Climate Efforts in the European Union'.

OTHER ISSUES

EU Bioeconomy Strategy

On 23rd June, WCS EU submitted a response to the EU Public Consultation on the "EU Bioeconomy Strategy", highlighting that building a successful bioeconomy sector requires protecting and enhancing the long-term resilience of the natural capital and biodiversity on which it depends. [Read more](#)

Simplification of EU Legislation

On 10th September, WCS EU submitted a response to the EU Call for Evidence on the "Simplification of administrative burdens in environmental legislation", calling for the EU to uphold the highest environmental standards and to categorically reject compromises that erode the integrity of the legal framework protecting our natural heritage. [Read more](#)



Supporting Field Implementation through Funding and Partnerships



Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme

The 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. The Programme is currently in its second phase, which started in 2023 for 3 years. [Read more](#)

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



The major highlights of the Programme for 2025 are:

- **Democratic Republic of Congo:** The SWM Programme is supporting the government in the creation of the first national wildlife policy. In 2025, six large consultations were held across the country to gather feedback on the policy draft from a large range of stakeholders. Additionally, Guillaume supported the Okapi Wildlife Reserve to facilitate a participatory revision of the Directives for Access to Natural Resources, with more than 100 community members participating in a drafting workshop. These Directives aim at securing the sustainable use rights of Indigenous Peoples and community rights holders who live in the Reserve while preserving its extraordinary biodiversity.
- **Republic of Congo:** The first pilot hunting management plan has been developed in partnership with the government and the hunting association of the Kabo village. To encourage the development of micro-livestock farming (e.g. poultry, goats and sheep) as an alternative to consuming wild meat in the city of Ouesso and neighbouring villages, the SWM Programme is pioneering a private veterinary system in Northern Congo.
- **Madagascar:** The first version of a national wildlife policy was created through a participatory workshop. The SWM Programme also collaborated closely with the government to revise the operational tools for community-based organisations responsible for managing their natural resources.
- **Papua New Guinea:** Five clans from the Yasina community in Papua New Guinea's (PNG) Eastern Highlands have come together to formally protect 2,000 hectares of ancestral forest. The signature of the Conservation Deed and the launch of the natural resources management plan represent a key milestone in the formalization of customary rules and sustainable land use for this community. In December, Caroline facilitated a 3-day workshop on Human Rights Based Approach and social safeguards for WCS staff in PNG.
- **Asia-Pacific:** Since 2024, the Programme's scope has expanded to include the One Health approach in relation to wild meat consumption and trade, and legal analysis in Asia Pacific. In 2025, Vietnam joined Lao PDR in the initiative.



The DARN defines the conditions of access and use of the Reserve's natural resources (wood, non-timber forest products, game, fish, etc.) for sustainable use by people considered to be OWR residents. This document will make it possible to secure the rights of use of resident communities and monitor compliance for the sustainable and local use of the Reserve's natural resources. © Guillaume Baralle, WCS EU

Held from 24-28 November, the five-day workshop brought together the Okapi Wildlife Reserve team, local community members, and Indigenous Peoples living in and around the Reserve with the aim of jointly drafting the Directives for Access to Natural Resources (DARN).



Participants of the DARN Consultation. Community consultations involved more than 2,000 people in all the chiefdoms and sectors in the Reserve, followed by a drafting workshop attended by more than 175 women and men, including Indigenous Peoples. © Guillaume Baralle, WCS EU

NaturAfrica

WCS is pleased to be an implementing partner of the EU NaturAfrica initiative, which supports programmes that connect conservation and development in key national and transboundary landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa. It is one of the regional initiatives under the Global Gateway. [Read more](#)

The NaturAfrica initiative supports biodiversity conservation in Africa through an innovative, people-centred approach. It identifies key landscapes for conservation and development where the EU will focus its support to create jobs, improve security and sustainable livelihoods, while preserving the ecosystems and wildlife that are vital to all. Measures to support conservation include capacity-building, anti-poaching, ecological monitoring, research and management effectiveness.

WCS is working in several major NaturAfrica landscapes :

- Cross River in Nigeria
- Nouabalé-Ndoki in the Republic of Congo
- Bénoué in Cameroon
- Bamingui-Bangoran in the Central African Republic
- Lopé, Ivindo, and Mayumba in Gabon

In all of these we are working to conserve biodiversity, support local governance, and provide benefits for local communities.



Green economy in the Republic of the Congo

WCS is working with local communities to ensure the continued conservation of the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in the Republic of the Congo, which harbours pristine lowland rainforest and is home to many iconic species, notably forest elephants, Western lowland gorillas, and chimpanzees. With the support of NaturAfrica, WCS is developing green economy activities that benefit local communities, particularly women, through ecotourism and supporting local producers in small ruminant farming.

Sustainable cocoa in Nigeria

In Cross River, WCS is working with the EU's support to bring together the private sector, local authorities, local communities and women's groups to create a deforestation-free landscape, whilst also bringing benefits to local people through improved cocoa production – whilst safeguarding the protection of endangered species such as gorillas, chimpanzees and forest elephants. [Watch the video](#)

Recent launch in Cameroon

With support from NaturAfrica, Bénoué National Park in northern Cameroon is set to become a leading example of how conservation and sustainable development can thrive together. Through conserving biodiversity, fostering green livelihoods for local communities, and advancing inclusive, participatory governance, the initiative will create lasting benefits for people and nature.



Nature's Recovery in Central African Republic

In August 2025, WCS captured photographic and video evidence of a lioness with three cubs at Bamingui-Bangoran National Park in northern Central African Republic for the first time in decades - a sign that the investment being made through NaturAfrica is creating stability, reducing poaching and helping the wildlife to return. [Watch the video](#)

New Partnership for Protected Area Management in Gabon

On 30th October, WCS and the Gabonese National Parks Agency (ANPN) signed the country's first ever partnership commitment toward the establishment of management agreements for Ivindo, Loango, Lopé and Mayumba National Parks. The signing is part of a new national policy to diversify management models, foster innovative solutions for sustainable financing, and facilitate the sharing of technical expertise with conservation partners. Lopé and Ivindo National Parks, both UNESCO World Heritage sites, and Mayumba Coastal Park will benefit from EU financial support under the NaturAfrica regional program and the EU/Gabon Forest Partnership. [Read more](#)



Signing ceremony between WCS and ANPN leadership. © WCS



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