

2024 Activity Report

We Stand for Wildlife®





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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 & Advocacy



EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

European Elections

On April 25th, WCS EU launched its manifesto for the 2024 EU Elections, calling on candidates for the European Parliament to support policies that protect high-integrity ecosystems, and halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally, including by supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities; tackle climate change and halt deforestation and forest degradation; support an integrated One Health approach across sectors, including actions to prevent pathogen spillover and future pandemics; stop illegal and unsustainable trade in wildlife, fisheries, and timber; and protect the oceans and the marine environment. [Read more](#)

Belgian Biodiversity Strategy

On September 24th, WCS EU submitted comments to the Public Consultation on the Update of Belgium's National Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), highlighting the critical need to protect high-integrity ecosystems and to scale global biodiversity finance. [Read more](#)

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office

On October 3rd, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in a workshop on 'Natural Resources Management in Fragile Contexts' organised by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) in Brussels. During the workshop, he highlighted the importance of developing and implementing conservation-friendly transhumance practices, which can play a key role in addressing challenges at the intersection of biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource use, and conflict prevention.

Convention on Biological Diversity

In the run-up to the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16) in Cali, WCS EU, the Embassy of Colombia in Brussels, and the Belgian Biodiversity Platform hosted a pre-COP16 event on October 7th in Brussels to discuss the integration of global frameworks and international commitments to achieve policy goals and biodiversity gains. [Read more](#)



Speakers and the audience at the pre-COPs event in Brussels

WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh joined the WCS Delegation at CBD COP16 held from October 21st to November 1st in Cali, Colombia, to liaise with the European Commission and the EU Member States. She published an opinion piece in Euractiv, expressing concerns about signs that political support for meaningful environmental action—particularly on biodiversity—is weakening.

[Read more](#)

Next EU Budget

On November 4th, WCS EU coordinated with 20 organisations, including environmental NGOs, conservation groups, youth associations, research institutes, and foundations, on a letter calling for the EU to prioritise biodiversity conservation in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034) for international cooperation. [Read more](#)

COMBATING DEFORESTATION

High Integrity Forest Investment

On May 6th, Dan Zarin, WCS Executive Director for Forests and Climate Change, and Carlos Rittl, WCS Director of Public Policy, Forests and Climate Change, met with representatives of DG International Partnerships, DG Environment, and DG Research in Brussels to present WCS's global perspectives on biodiversity credits and the High Integrity Forest Investment Initiative (HIFOR).

[Read more](#)

EU-LAC Policy Dialogue

On June 27th, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens presented on the conservation and restoration of forest ecological integrity as a nature-based solution at the first "EU - Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Countries Policy Dialogue on Nature-based Solutions" organised by the European Commission. [Read more](#)

IUCN Regional Conservation Forum

On October 1st, WCS EU organised a session with Dr. Tom Evans, WCS Senior Director for Forest Conservation on scaling finance of high-integrity tropical forests / HIFOR at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia, which took place in Bruges, Belgium. [Read more](#)



WCS's Dr. Tom Evans speaking at the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia

HEALTH

WHO Pandemic Agreement

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens represented WCS at the ninth meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB9) to draft and negotiate a WHO Pandemic Agreement, on 26-28 March and 7-10 May, at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva. At a Relevant Stakeholders meeting with the Bureau Co-Chair, he stressed the importance of making pandemic prevention at the source a priority in the agreement negotiations.

[Read more](#)

KU Leuven One Health Conference

On April 23rd, Prof. Dr. Chris Walzer, WCS Executive Director of Health, presented on the environment, wildlife, health nexus and food systems at a 'One Health - Research and Innovation' conference organised at the KU Leuven University under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

[Read more](#)

Quadripartite One Health Seminar

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in the Quadripartite (FAO, WOA, UNEP, WHO) One Health Regional Seminar for Europe and Central Asia, which took place on 11-13 June in Vienna, Austria, where he presented the WCS Health programme and our main One Health objectives and activities in Europe and Central Asia.

[Read more](#)



WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens speaking at the Quadripartite One Health Seminar at the Veterinary University of Vienna

Group of Chief Scientific Advisors

On November 20th, WCS EU released a news statement welcoming the publication of a Scientific Opinion 'One Health Governance in the European Union' by the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, which draws on important lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and offers several key recommendations for the effective implementation of the One Health approach. [Read more](#)

PREZODE

On November 21st, WCS's Sarah Olson and Lucy Keatts and WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in the General Assembly of the PREZODE (Preventing ZOonotic Disease Emergence) Initiative in Brussels. Lucy presented on the critical need to employ a risk-based approach to effectively prevent pandemics. [Read more](#)



WCS's Lucy Keatts presenting at the PREZODE GA

On December 5th, in collaboration with the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and the University of Liège, WCS EU organised a Belgian PREZODE Expert Workshop in Brussels to develop a roadmap aligned with key European and international policy objectives to advance the implementation of the Belgian 'One World, One Health' Vision. [Read more](#)



WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens introducing the Belgian PREZODE Expert Workshop in Brussels

COUNTER-WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Global Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference

On April 24th, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens represented WCS at a Global Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference organised by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) in Brussels, with over 80 governments representatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Arnaud delivered a presentation on strengthening partnerships with governments, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and civil society organisations to combat wildlife crime, sharing lessons from the field. [Read more](#)

Registration of Captive Breeding Facilities

On July 12th, WCS EU submitted comments to the EU Consultation on 'Wildlife trade – alignment of EU rules with recent decisions taken under the CITES convention on wildlife trade'. [Read more](#)

CITES

On May 21st, WCS's Sue Lieberman and WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in an EU stakeholders meeting on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) with DG ENV and EU Member States to provide WCS priorities for the upcoming CITES COP20 in 2025.

On October 1st, WCS was invited to speak at the EU CITES Anniversary Event, hosted by the European Commission's DG Environment in Brussels. WCS was represented by Manoly Sisavanh, WCS Laos Deputy Director, who provided insights from the field. [Read more](#)



WCS Laos' Manoly Sisavanh speaking at the EU CITES Anniversary Event in Brussels

MARKETS & BUSINESS

EU Business and Biodiversity Platform

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens was invited to serve again on the Advisory Board of the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform by the European Commission and joined the 2024 Advisory Board meeting on February 7th to provide strategic advice and forge linkages with relevant private and public initiatives and the wider business community. [Read more](#)

MARINE CONSERVATION

EU Ban on Loose Shark Fins

On May 16th, WCS EU submitted a response to an EU call for evidence on 'better protecting sharks through sustainable fishing and trade', recommending an EU ban on loose shark fins within the EU market and for international trade. [Read more](#)

OECD Blue Economy

On September 16th-17th, WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh represented WCS in a workshop for members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, to provide key inputs to new guidance being developed for government donors on the theme of the Blue Economy.

OTHER ISSUES

CMS COP14 in Uzbekistan

WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens joined the WCS delegation to the 14th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP14) from 12 to 17 February in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to liaise with the EU and its Member States and to coordinate a side event on the EU-funded initiative on climate change modeling for biodiversity conservation in Afghanistan. [Read more](#)



WCS Delegation at CMS COP14 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Chinese Ministry of Environment

On June 21st, WCS EU's Arnaud Goessens participated in a roundtable discussion with members of the Chinese Ministry of Environment and civil society organisations in Brussels to promote implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).

IUCN

WCS EU became an official member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and was actively engaged in the IUCN Regional Conservation Forum for Europe, North, and Central Asia, which took place from 30 September to 3 October in Bruges, Belgium. WCS EU organised two sessions and held a booth to share insights on key policy work and conservation efforts linked to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF). [Read more](#)



WCS EU's Janice Weatherley-Singh moderating a panel discussion at the IUCN RCF in Bruges

New WCS EU Staff Member

Camilla Davila joined WCS EU as a part-time Event and Communications Assistant to enhance our communication with internal and external stakeholders.



WCS EU's Camilla Davila



Supporting Field Implementation through Funding and Partnerships



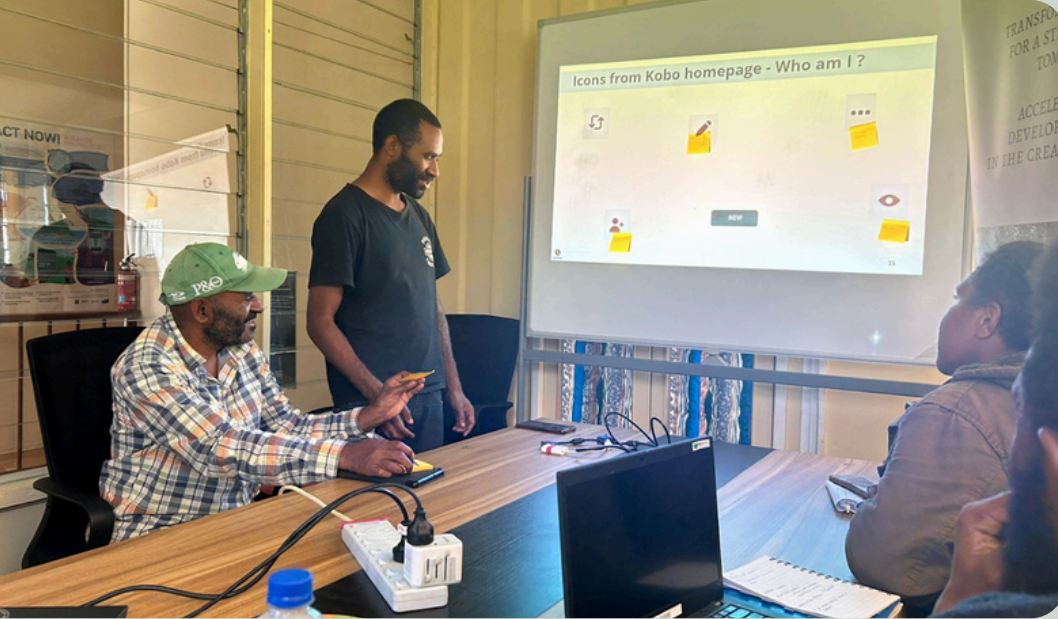
Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme

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 Sustainable Wildlife Management (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 2024, SWM sites advanced their activities as part of the Programme's second phase, accompanied by evaluations through result-oriented monitoring (ROM). Additionally, the SWM Asia project launched its activities in Laos.

- **DRC:** The Legal Hub's analysis enabled the government to initiate a legal reform process of the fauna sector.
- **Congo:** The field team collaborated with SWM communities to establish an autonomous community-based hunting monitoring system. The project also supported the national government in revising the wildlife and protected area law.
- **Madagascar:** An additional SWM-supported community-based organisation successfully renewed its legal agreement to manage their community area. Caroline traveled to Madagascar to support the project, selected by the evaluator, for the ROM process.
- **PNG:** The team began working with a new community that signed their FPIC agreement. In March, Guillaume conducted a field mission to support activity implementation, staff training, and the development of knowledge products.



Training session on the use of KoboToolBox in WCS PNG office © Guillaume Baralle / WCS EU

The FAO organised a 3-day meeting in Rome, from June 17-19, focused on validating the SWM Programme's Legal Hub, a comprehensive online platform that compiles relevant legal texts and analyses. The meeting includes analyses of legal tools relevant to wildlife management, One Health, rights and communities, animal health, food safety, hunting, wildlife tourism, ecosystem management, inland fisheries, and relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Several experts from FAO, MEAs, Intergovernmental organisations, national legal experts, and non-governmental organisations participated in the meeting. WCS was represented by Dr. Susan Lieberman, Vice-President for International Policy, and WCS EU was represented by Arnaud Goessens. [Read more](#)



Participants at the SWM Programme, Legal Diagnostic Tool Validation Workshop in Rome

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](#)

In close collaboration with the WCS Counter-Wildlife Trafficking team, WCS EU developed a brochure with three case studies of EU-funded, WCS-led initiatives that implement holistic approaches to combating wildlife trafficking, including the initiative 'Disrupting Illicit Supply Chains of Wildlife in the Niassa Special Reserve through Law Enforcement and Community Engagement'. The brochure also highlights key recommendations of how further EU support can expand the work being done by 'on-the-ground' NGOs. [Read more](#)





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