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Smuggling of elephant ivory and rhino horn on agenda of UN-backed forum



A forest elephant in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: UNESCO

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The massive smuggling of elephant ivory and rhino horn, tiger conservation and the illegal trade in great apes are among the issues on the agenda of a United Nations-backed [meeting](#) taking place in Geneva this week.

Some 350 participants are participating in the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which began in Geneva yesterday.

The Committee oversees the implementation of rules for the international trade in protected wildlife on behalf of the Conference of the 175 member countries of CITES.

Elephant issues, including rising levels in the illegal killing of elephants and ivory smuggling, features high on the agenda of the week-long meeting, as does the drivers behind the “exploding” demand in rhino horn, according to a news release issued by the CITES secretariat, which is administered by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)).

“With elephant and rhino poaching and smuggling levels being the worst in a decade, it is clear that strong additional measures are required,” said the Chairman of the Committee, Øysten Størkersen, adding that 2013 will be a critical year to adopt enhanced measures to protect the planet’s biodiversity and ensure effective implementation on the ground.

“The present meeting will help set the priorities and to ensure the long-term survival of key species we would like to leave to future generations,” he stated.

The meeting will also review the progress made in the implementation of measures to reduce the over-exploitation of freshwater turtles and tortoises, as well as some frogs and plants from Madagascar, in addition to discussing the sourcing of Asian snakes used in the leather industry. Also on the agenda are tiger conservation initiatives and the illegal trade in great apes.

This week’s gathering will also decide on the agenda of the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will take place in Bangkok in March 2013, and will coincide with the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Convention.

CITES regulates international trade in close to 35,000 species of plants and animals, including their products and derivatives, ensuring their survival in the wild with benefits for the livelihoods of local people and the global environment.

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