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PRESS RELEASE OF THE BUSHMEAT-FREE EASTERN AFRICAN NETWORK

Experts agree bushmeat a major challenge in East Africa

On 7th & 8th December 2009, 34 experts representing 22 different conservation organizations, development organizations and government agencies from Kenya, Tanzania, Southern Sudan, and Uganda assembled in Kampala, Uganda to discuss bushmeat (the illegal and unsustainable hunting of wildlife for meat and income). The participants shared information on challenges, ongoing solutions and future needs to address the bushmeat problem in Eastern Africa.

Despite the best efforts of governments, NGOs, the private sector and local communities to address threats to wildlife and their habitats, these threats continue and in some cases increase. These experts agreed that bushmeat is one of the leading threats to wildlife and livelihoods and must be addressed using every means possible.

Addressing bushmeat effectively requires partnerships that coordinate alternative livelihoods and protein development, increased bushmeat awareness and strengthened law enforcement and policy. Such conservation-development-community-private sector partnerships must ensure their effectiveness through capacity building and greater resource allocation for targeting the bushmeat challenge.

Given the variety of stakeholders engaged in the dynamic bushmeat challenge in and around protected areas across Eastern



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Africa, coordination is needed. A network that seeks to establish consensus, identify gaps in knowledge, build awareness, improve capacity, and increase resources and dedicated action in the region on the bushmeat issue can provide this coordination. The newly-formed Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) will facilitate such processes. By bringing together expertise on the bushmeat issue in a centralized network and providing support and coordination to ongoing conservation and development efforts, BEAN can help meet wildlife conservation goals. The partners of BEAN also plan to engage and share learning with other networks and programs working on this issue throughout Africa and other regions of the world.

Two individuals from each of the partner countries received specialized training in addressing the bushmeat issue in their respective countries. Building on their training and successes, the eight beneficiaries of this US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-funded MENTOR programme (www.mentorfellowshipprogram.org) laid the ground work for BEAN. While BEAN develops its long-term strategies, concrete actions are already underway and demonstrating progress. These activities include:

Raising awareness, focusing attention, sharing information, developing strategies, evaluating and reporting on trends, building partnerships, and leveraging resources to implement grassroots solutions that directly address bushmeat problems affecting wildlife and communities in protected areas and surrounding landscapes.



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The participants agreed to formalize the partnership with clear roles and responsibilities under the guidance of the BEAN vision:

“Envisioning a future marked by partnerships that enable diverse, sustainable wildlife populations, viable protein and income alternatives, freedom from wildlife diseases and conflict, and supporting eastern Africa’s cultural, economic and ecological heritage for generations to come.”

Media contact;

The BEAN Communications Officer

Mr Iregi Mwenja

Tel: +254723713642

Email: iregim@Yahoo.com