

## **Session 1**

### **The value of wildlife is in the eye of the beholder**

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This presentation is an introduction on what can be expected from and the objectives of this Stream 2 on Conservation Wildlife and Bushmeat.

The conservation community, made up of nature protection NGOs and governmental conservation institutions, together with the development community (grassroots NGOs, governmental development institutions, development agencies) refer to a variety of concepts when referring to the use and/or protection of wildlife. These include: sustainability, viability, natural resource management, outstanding values, extreme conservation, habitat suitability, and food security.

As referred to in the final Technical Report “Elements de Prospective à l’horizon 2040 pour les écosystèmes forestiers d’Afrique Centrale”, by CIRAD, 2013, there seems to be a lack of common language, confusion on definitions of terminology when talking about these concepts, and, in fact, I copy/paste: “l’élan réformateur qui a pu être observé dans plusieurs pays dans les années 1990-2000 semble s’être épuisé” (p29). In an attempt to reactivate some of those dynamics, we want to invite all stakeholders present - governmental representatives, donors, academics, civil society, big ngo’s - to take a moment, sit back and reflect on a number of those concepts which we use almost daily, but for which our individual opinions do not seem to reflect a common understanding.

It is normal that different groups and stakeholders - and let’s not forgot the local communities who are prime utilizers and often dependent on these natural resources - place sometimes contrasting or even conflicting values on wildlife. Visions and approaches held by different interest groups are as diverse as the goods and services provided by wildlife (biological diversity, habitat, food, employment and economics, medicine, and potential tourism). However, even within stakeholder groups, there are sometimes differences in understanding of seemingly straightforward concepts or the interaction, overlap and differences between those concepts.

While at first sight, the vocabulary seems relatively straightforward, practitioners and policy makers sometimes make unclear and confused use of these concepts during discussions on how to translate them into policy, on-the-ground action, and real impact for conservation and human well-being. This often has a detrimental impact on the intended objectives. A situation in which relevant concepts are not adequately defined or understood can generate misunderstanding and mistrust between stakeholders, and ultimately form a barrier to effective collaboration on the establishment of clear guidelines and directions for conservation and the sustainable use of wildlife.

Without clear understanding of used language, it will be difficult to reconcile the opinions of the conservation and development communities and difficult to avoid the promulgation of dogmatic and opposing positions. Protecting wildlife while permitting its partial use is a complex issue, requiring holistic approaches and cross-sectoral collaboration that has been lacking with regards to the Congo Basin Forest (CBF) until now. In practice, there is considerable common ground between wildlife conservation and human wellbeing, which needs to be recognized and embraced.

To advance strong recommendations for the future of the CBF, we need to agree on what the various concepts currently in use are and how they should be defined and understood. In the proposed stream, we will first shed light on concepts related to conservation, sustainable use, and bushmeat, and in so doing, identify causes of confusion around their definition and use by the conservation and development communities.

After this first introductory session, we have two major sessions. Session 2, June 17<sup>th</sup> and Session 3, June 18<sup>th</sup>, will concentrate on controversial topics related to “conservation from a wildlife protection perspective” and “conservation from a wildlife for human wellbeing perspective” respectively. For each of these two sessions, there will be a presentation at the start of each session, as an introduction to each of the four main topics for discussion. Participants will then be invited to take part in one of the discussion groups. A session chairperson will facilitate proceedings of each session to maximize participation by all participants, assure that suggested interventions are noted, and that ideas are translated into one or two solid recommendations from each group. During the final plenary session, June 18<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon, the list of recommendations will be presented for deliberation and consensus building.