

Wildlife Justice

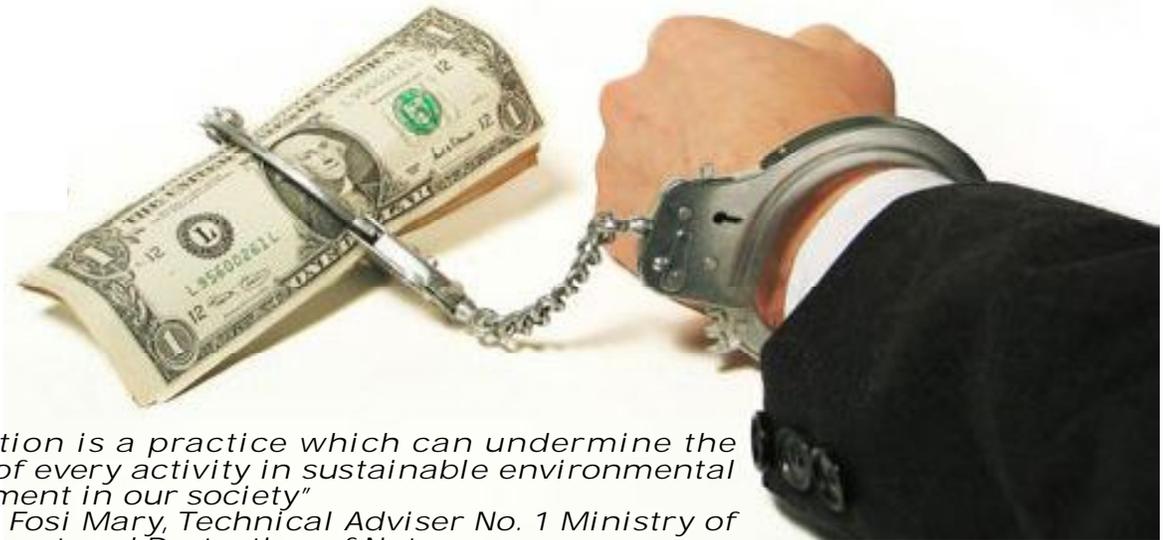
No.006 -June 2009

Bilingual wildlife law enforcement journal

WILDLIFE CRIME AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

"We should make the wildlife sector void of corruption"
Prof. Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, Minister of Forestry and Wildlife

"We found strong associations between governance scores and changes in the numbers of African elephants and black rhinoceroses".
R. J. Smith et Al.



"Corruption is a practice which can undermine the process of every activity in sustainable environmental management in our society"
Madame Fosi Mary, Technical Adviser No. 1 Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature

"Whether it be high-profile embezzlement or low-level bribe to a petty bureaucrat, corruption is a major force... destroying natural Resources"

Greg Mock, World Resources Institute.



Corruption, corruption, corruption

In introducing this edition of *Wildlife Justice* on the connection between corruption and wildlife crime, a personal story comes to my mind. In the early days of LAGA, back in 2003, I used to spend days over days in court following the first wildlife cases ever to be prosecuted in Cameroon. One of these days, I could not forget, left me with a strong sense of finding a cause worthy of fighting for. A young boy poorly dressed stepped in front of the judge, his handcuffs removed. He was accused of stealing one shoe in Yaounde's central market. The judge mocked him, asking if he has only one foot to steal just one shoe and the crowd burst into laughter, but then stopped when the judge ordered him to get back to jail for a month before his case could be discussed. Ten minutes later a suspected gang of three approached the bench. The court clerk read that the three were members of a criminal gang accused of carrying out a series of armed robbery in the student's neighbourhood of CRADAT. They were caught in the act of moving from one room to the next robbing and beating their victims. A judicial police officer placed on the table in front of the judge several mobile phones and a handgun. The judge did not ask the three any questions and ruled again that their case will only be discussed the following month, but added the three are to go home free. This time the crowd didn't laugh at all, there were voices of protest. The man besides me called – "what kind of justice is in this court of justice?" and the judge had to use his wooden hammer to stop the audience's discontent. That day I realized how hard corruption can hit the society and erode state institutions, and that one of the worst things corruption can do is make law and justice irrelevant.

Corruption has been identified as the first obstacle of development in Africa, and the conservation battle is not an exception, as corruption hits conservation projects and undermines the application of well conceived plans and legislation.

In the case of the wildlife law, corruption has resulted in its complete lack of application for almost a decade, not only in Cameroon but in almost all countries in Central and West Africa. Cameroon adopted a new approach of tackling corruption in the field, courts and prisons moving from a baseline of zero wildlife prosecutions to a rate of one major wildlife dealer prosecuted per week. Most other countries of the two sub-regions still can not stand to show a single wildlife prosecution.

From those early days in 2003, LAGA became an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process: bribing attempts have been documented, since, in 85% of field arrest operations, and 80% of all court cases within the legal system, exposing the challenge we are facing as activists – the challenge not just to observe corruption, but fight it.

In this issue of *Wildlife Justice* we will try to explore different aspects of the harms of corruption and its relation to wildlife crime. We will review national and international academic research of corruption and the environment. Two legal experts will each try to explain the effect of corruption on the legal system. Diplomats will discuss policies in the fight against corruption and its relations to wildlife conservation. Various government officials will discuss both the obstacles of corruption on their tasks, as well as the ways they have developed to fight it back. Other articles will gather several experts digging into the causes and harms of corruption, its environmental impact and the role of civil society in the fight against corruption.

The Cameroonian public is still split into those who are afraid to talk about corruption and those who have the courage to face it and fight it heads on. This issue of *wildlife justice* is our contribution to the opening up of such an important discussion.

Ofir Drori
Director LAGA

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATION
OFIR DRORI

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
VINCENT GUDMIA MFONFU

EDITORIAL TEAM
ERIC KABATAH
ANNA EGBE
ALAIN BERNARD ONONINO

CONTRIBUTION
Dr. CHIAUGUSTINE MUAM
OLIVE NAHKUNA MFONFU

PRE-PRESS
ERIC KABATAH

PRINTERS
MAMA PRESS
PO BOX 1839, YAOUNDE
TEL: (+237) 77 58 15 23/94 24 39 13

DISTRIBUTION
MEDIA & EXTERNAL RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT-LAGA
TEL: (+237) 77862693, 75523180

FINANCED BY: US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Rufford Foundation



Tel: (+237) 75221166
BP: 4916, Nlongkak, Yaounde
Email: ofir@laga-enforcement.org
Website: www.laga-enforcement.org

High Level Fight Against Corruption in the Wildlife Sector in Cameroon

By Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu

Cameroon is a signatory to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) which, amongst other things, has as purpose, “to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively”. As former Secretary-General of the United Nations while in office stated that “Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development,” it determines “a Government’s ability to provide basic services”. The former United Nations boss was sending a strong message that, “the international community is determined to prevent and control corruption”. By adopting the UNCAC in 2003, the UN General Assembly took into consideration the resolution of paragraph 19 of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Declaration in which “corruption was declared a threat to the sustainable development of people”.

That is why the Cameroon Head of State, President Paul Biya, has demonstrated the firm will of his government to fight corruption which consists essentially of equipping the country with judicial and political structures, notably, the Audit Bench, the Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC) and the National Financial Investigation Agency (ANIF), with the responsibility of engaging a merciless fight to limit and subsequently eradicate corruption.

In translating rhetoric into concrete action within the wildlife sector, President Paul Biya in a Decree sacked a magistrate who, amongst other things, failed to properly apply the wildlife law of 1994 on a wildlife trafficker. The Magistrate who was revoked from the Magistracy profession by Presidential Decree No. 2008/90 of May 27, 2008 was alleged to be involved in crimes related to corrupt practices in a wildlife case in the Court of First Instance in Bonanjo, Douala, in the Littoral Region.

Uncovered by The Last Great Ape Organisation (LAGA), this case concerned a certain Biamou Hamza Cyrille, who was caught in Douala in 2005 in possession of elephant tusks and carved ivory products in contravention of the 1994 wildlife law. To potential corrupt officials, President Paul Biya warns, “We now have institutional structures to track down corruption in all its forms”.

While the Chief Executive – the Head of State lays down the policies, the Ministers with the supervision of the Prime Minister and Head of Government execute them in the field.

And so with this high level warning, Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu sought to know from the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, how his Ministry is tackling corruption in the wildlife sector.



Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle Minister of Forestry and Wildlife seen releasing into the wild some parrots seized from traffickers.

Excerpts:

The International community has come to the conclusion that wildlife trafficking in Cameroon is rooted in corruption. How is your Ministry tackling corruption in the wildlife sector?

Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle: You made a point that wildlife trafficking is rooted in corruption which is true. Those who engage in wildlife exploitation as the word connotes, tend to act and think, it’s a wild activity which should be carried out in the wild and therefore there should be no reason for civility or civil considerations. Well, that is wrong.

Any government official found engaged in corrupt practice is considered a criminal just like the wildlife trafficker and has to be punished even double. Forestry and Wildlife Minister Prof. Elvis Ngolle Ngolle Ngolle

We believe that, as we have evolved as more civilized society, we think that, that evolution towards a more civilized society should also take place in the wild. We should be able to throw civility towards our wildlife, reason why in the whole world, wildlife protection is taken seriously. There should be no room for wildlife trafficking, rooted, as the international community has observed, in corruption.

That is why, our government has put in place strict laws to govern the wildlife sector and a strict penal code to tackle corruption in the sector as well. Any government official found engaged in corrupt practice is considered a criminal just

like the wildlife trafficker and has to be punished even double.

How are you sustaining your fight against wildlife crimes and corruption?

Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle: We have a moral duty and at the same time a political and managerial one to make sure that we educate not only those engaged in the exploitation sector but also to educate those who are actually involved in administering the sector, meaning government agents so that anybody in the administration side who is engaged in anyway in complicity fuelled

by corruption with those who violate the wildlife law will be punished and sanctioned like those trafficking in wildlife.

And so, the moral obligation is not only on the side of those who are engaged in exploitation to respect the law, it is also on the side of those in Administration of the law, because complicity is as evil, criminal and wrong, as those who have committed the wildlife crime or who have defaulted.

Corruption levels and the effects on public life

By Eric Kaba Tah

Whether it be high profile embezzlement or low-level bribe to a petty bureaucrat, corruption is a major force...destroying natural resources", Greg Mock, World Resources Institute (WRI)

Who is a corrupt person? Collins Today English Dictionary defines a corrupt person as one who "behaves dishonestly or illegally in exchange for money or power". And if a system is corrupt, the Dictionary explains, "it is run dishonestly and is open to bribery". About bribery, the reference book further explains thus, "If someone offers you a bribe or tries to bribe you, they offer you money or something else, to get you to do something wrong or illegal" A system in which people seek personal illegitimate gain through bribery, embezzlement and extortion etc is a corrupt system. And any system that works on the basis of dishonestly and illicitly gotten wealth, by public officials is a corrupt system. This may be big embezzlers or just small bribe takers around the corner.

Corruption spreads its tentacles into every sector of public life. This could be grand corruption which is said to relate mostly to high level public officials and involves large illegal transactions. This is also manifested through what world bank officials explain "refers to the action of individuals, groups or firms ... to influence the formation of laws, regulations and other government policies to their own advantage as a result of the illicit... provision of private benefits to public officials". And Stefan Lovgren of National Geographic News cites a situation where government officials "manipulate data to limit recovery of species facing extinction in order to protect financial interests". Such high level corruption involves huge amounts of money.

Petty corruption is reported to be practiced by low level public officials. This may occur during environmental inspections and policing of illegal acts such as illegal trade in wildlife and prosecution of wildlife law defaulters. The commonest form of corruption at this level is bribery. These officials demand bribes in exchange for services or tasks they ought to do. The irony of low level corruption is that it is practiced most often on even poorer citizens who can barely afford anything. Michel van Hulsten, co-founder

of Transparency International and Head of the CHOC programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for fighting corruption in Cameroon says, "Corruption and bribery always hit the poor hardest, extracting an extra tax from those who can least afford it".

Corruption can simply be put as stealing from the ordinary man and giving to the rich. Resources which are meant for the general good of the people are siphoned to the bank accounts of a few. Mechanic Macomba of Transparency International Senegal states, "Corruption is endemic...every part of society touched...from top to bottom. It is all spoiled. The situation has become catastrophic". Although corruption is a



worldwide evil phenomenon, it is particularly damaging to developing countries with fragile economies, weak institutional structures especially the judiciary and high poverty levels. Mina Balamoune-Lutz of the University of North Florida and Léonce Ndikumana of The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Adis Ababa state, "Existing evidence

"Corruption and bribery always hit the poor hardest, extracting an extra tax from those who can least afford it".
 Michael van Hulsten
 Co-founder Transparency International

shows that African countries exhibit relatively higher levels of corruption, which constitutes a major constraint to efforts aimed at accelerating growth in order to achieve internationally and nationally mandated development goals".

Meaningful development efforts are seriously undermined by corrupt practices because resources allocated for development are rechanneled by corrupt officials for personal business. It erodes established social norms since

people no longer look forward to honestly earned and legitimate money but towards easily and dishonestly gotten wealth. They accept this new immoral activity as the norm and as Dominique Correa of Transparency International observes, "People have lowered their hands and just find it normal".

Corruption undermines government's ability to undertake public services and reduces foreign investment since it tarnishes a country's image and establishes a situation of uncertainty, favouritism and obscurity. Money meant for such public investments find its way into private pockets. Corruption inflates government's expenditure and raises the cost of operations. On the issue of inflation for example, World Bank sources report that they found evidence that about 300 000 US dollars (about 150 million CFA francs) were paid to Indonesian Public Work Ministry officials for a contract award worth 6 million US dollars (about 3 billion CFA francs). This not only creates opaqueness in the processing of government activities but creates a bad image of the country in the eyes of the foreign investors.

The vices of corruption are many and include among others, abuse of power, amassing of illicit wealth, laundering, fraud, forging of government documents and trafficking. Corruption is rendering development unsustainable, hampering economic growth, and destroying our natural resources. Trafficking in drugs, arms and wildlife products are deeply rooted in corruption. Researchers have concluded that sectors like conservation and natural resource management which engage huge amounts of money do attract corrupt practices.



«Corruption compromises the constitutional principle of equality of citizens before the law»

*By Dr. Chi Augustine Muam

In broad terms Transparency International defines corruption as the “*the use of entrusted powers for private gain*”. It does not tell who the actors are nor the type of activities involved in corruption. How does corruption in public institutions responsible for wildlife law enforcement manifested itself? However defined, it should be noted that corruption is punishable by the Cameroon Penal Code. To paraphrase the Code, corruption is the violation of the obligations of probity, fidelity and partiality in the exercise of a public service, to the detriment of the user.

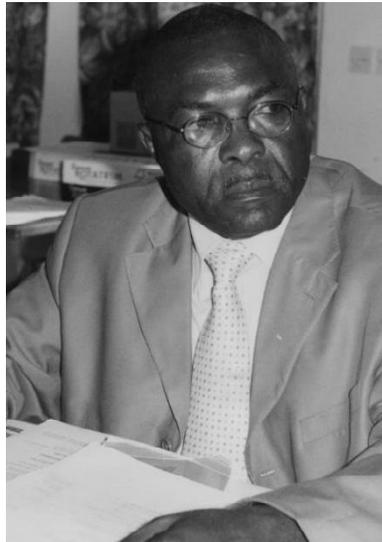
In practical terms, corruption is said to have taken place when an individual is paid to perform or refrain from performing his duty either with gifts, promises or presents. Corruption is also deemed to have occurred when an individual pays a civil servant to do his work or to refrain from doing so. From the foregoing and the language of the Penal Code it presupposes corruption is more common and rampant in the public service than in the private sector.

The fight against corruption these days is so fierce that one can liken it to the fight for political independence in the fifties and early sixties by African counties against colonial rule. Either way, the fight or struggle involved concerted effort by people, pressure groups, political parties, civil societies, the government, and the international community. That is exactly what obtains today in Cameroon. Of late, institutions such as Transparency International have not only been so vocal but have contributed immensely in the adoption of a 2003 African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences, which interestingly Cameroon is a Party to the Convention and has ratified.

That is why, on its part, in addition to media condemnation, the government instituted anti-corruption units in all ministerial departments and recently by a Presidential Decree a National Anti-corruption Commission was created. The 12-member commission took oath of office on the 31st of May 2007 at the Supreme Court in Yaounde. Corruption does not only undermine development (money intended for infrastructure goes to individual pockets) but destroys competition. Corruption compromises the constitutional principle of equality of citizens before the law. Corrupt practices in public administration are exacerbated or manifested in activities such as embezzlement, bribery and fraud, as explained below.

Embezzlement or Misappropriation:

Briefly defined ‘embezzlement’ or misappropriation (what the Frenchman will call



Dr. Chi Augustine Muam

détournement) according to the Penal Code, is anybody who by whatever means takes dishonestly, property, moveable or immovable, belonging to an authority. In essence a civil servant or employee who takes away money or property belonging to the government is guilty of embezzlement. A clear example is the case of the former General Manager of the Special Council Equipment Fund (FEICOM) who is being prosecuted for embezzling billions of CFA from his employer.



In the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife law there are offences that can be classified as embezzlement. A good example is logging beyond or quantity granted. Of course this will be the same as hunting beyond the quantity of animal species specified in a licence or hunting permit. Another offence is the habit of arbitrary seizure and confiscation of animal species or specimens from poachers. Though the Forestry and Wildlife law empowers law enforcement officers to search and seize product fraudulently exploited, this does not

imply that seized products becomes their private property nor that seizure halts prosecution of the defaulter.

Rather, seized animal products and equipment serving as exhibits to substantiate evidence during prosecution suppose to be what is contemplated by the law, else there will be no reason providing for penalties other than seizure for those who violate the law. The spirit of the law was not intended for seizures to substitute judicial penalties. Rather the law demands that only seized equipment (e.g; chain saws) may be restored where the person is a first offender, and if not, to be sold by public auction and the proceeds paid into the Treasury within 48 hours. Other seized equipments such as arms and ammunitions have to be handed over to the competent services of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation.

Anything outside the above requirement is an offence and the sanctions provided by the forestry and wildlife law are graduated based on the gravity of each offence or crime. The sanctions are even doubled where the offence is committed by sworn officials of the service concerned (e.g. forestry and wildlife officials) or by judicial police officers with general jurisdiction (e.g. police and gendarmes), without prejudice to administrative and disciplinary sanctions.

Bribery

‘Bribery’ has to do with a sum of money or something valuable that you give or offer to someone to persuade him or her to help you, especially by doing something dishonest. We see this very often when money is given to a police officer who examines the car documents of a taxi driver. In a case where the documents are not in order, the officer carries out a long painstaking search for other abnormalities, till the driver gives a tip.

Similar situations are those that occur in Forestry and Wildlife Control Stations (either fixed or mobile) where vehicles transporting timber, wildlife products and specimens are supposed to be thoroughly checked. These stations are responsible for controlling the enforcement of forestry and wildlife regulations in their jurisdiction. That is checking illegal exploitation by ensuring that vehicles evacuating forest and wildlife products have the valid waybills and certificates signed by the competent authority. But when reports are received that Customs authorities in a foreign country such in Zurich (Switzerland) airport have made several seizures of ivory that have been discovered in transit from Cameroon to destinations in Europe and the United States of America, one begins to wonder how these products got there when we have

Legislation

control stations both fixed and mobile on the ground. Can their probity be guaranteed?

The situation is aggravated when at the control stations there is a mixture of Gendarmerie, Police, Forestry and Game Guards. Because these officials belong to different ministerial departments and are accountable to different hierarchical authorities, there is bound to be a division or conflict when faced with the temptation of bribery from the all economically powerful logging companies. The tendency or likelihood is that, where in exceptional circumstances the forest and game guards are conservation oriented, the police and gendarmes will be economically driven. When this happens and the forest and wildlife officials suffer from inferiority complex because their colleagues (Police and Gendarmes) claim that by virtue of their corps and status they are answerable only to the Presidency of the Republic, one can guess the outcome.

Fraud

Finally 'fraud' is the crime of deceiving somebody in order to get money or goods illegally. This is rampant in the use of fake documents either to get a position in society, money or property. In the Forestry and Wildlife sector the law enumerates a number of offences that can be associated with fraud. The fraudulent use, forgery or destruction of marks, marking hammers, boundary marks or posts utilized by the service in charge for forestry and wildlife. The production of false supporting documents relating to know-

how, financial status, nationality and payment of security deposit to qualify for forestry exploitation for forestry exploitation. And the falsification or forgery of any document issued by the service in charge of forestry and wildlife. These offences are severely punished by the penal code with imprisonment for from ten to twenty years without prejudice to resorting to punishment by the wildlife law of from 3 million to 10 million CFA francs or imprisonment from one to three years or both such fine and imprisonment.

Fraudulent documents ought to be detected by law enforcement officials at Forestry and Wildlife Control Stations, Check Points and frontier stations. But I wonder whether the Police and Gendarme, as law enforcement officials, have the know-how to detect ineffective marking on logs evacuated, let alone identify illegal exploited, protected animal species and specimens?. Worst still are our Custom Officials at the airports and frontiers who are invaluable in the control of international trade in protected species and specimens. Do they equally have the requisite orientation, let alone consider controls in these sectors as part of their official functions or attribution?

As stated elsewhere, Customs authorities at Zurich airport, Switzerland, made several seizures of ivory that have been discovered in transit from Cameroon to destinations in Europe and the United States of America. Eight seizures in a short space of time suggest a lack of control by

the authorities in Cameroon over exports and domestic ivory markets. Even if one were to rule out bribery, it is apparent that the forestry and wildlife law does not made adequate provision for the implication of the Customs in forestry and wildlife law enforcement. This has contributed to their ignorance of samples of protected species and specimens and this becomes worse when concealed to facilitated exportation. Imagine, how will an unconcerned Custom Official detect ivory carvings and raw ivory pieces that have been painted (to resemble wood or ebony); have been hidden inside wooden figures and masks; and have been covered in clay that has then been baked and painted. I think the time is now to have the Customs fully integrated into forestry and wildlife law enforcement similar to what obtained in the combating Ozone Depleting Substances provided by the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature, though seminars and workshops.

***Senior lecturer, University of Douala.**

“The people that illegally trade in protected wildlife are very rich and always wanting to corrupt Government agents”, Mrs Mbah Grace, South West Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife



*Mrs Mbah Grace
South West MINFOF Delegate*

A well known recent study shows a link between corruption and decreases in wildlife species. Some politicians and government officials with what Barret C et al. style «short time horizons and few legal checks on their power», are most likely to augment their wealth and those of their supporters by supporting over-exploitation of biodiversity such as wildlife. This was the case when a wildlife trafficker entered the Korup National Park in Ndiian Division of the South West Region and gunned down 7 elephants for illegal ivory trade at the request of some urban elites.

The South West Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife, Mrs. Mbah Grace talked to *Wildlife Justice* on how some of them resist corruption in the discharge of their duties.

Excerpts:

Most of these wildlife criminals are said to be very rich and tend to bribe government agents to facilitate their deals. Can you tell us what it takes to resist the temptations of allowing yourselves become corrupted?

Mrs. Mbah Grace: Well, I think in life one must decide whether you want to do a good job or whether you want to get rich through corruption. And once you have decided that you have a profession that you love and want to protect, I think it is not advisable to go messing about with unscrupulous or so-called rich people.

It is our moral duty to take care of our natural resources for present and future generations. Every profession is a call. So you must take that decision and once you have taken it and you stick to it, you can be able to overcome all types of temptations of getting yourself soiled through corruption.

What is the support of the hierarchy in fighting these unscrupulous dealers?

Mrs. Mbah Grace: Surely, the people that illegally trade in elephant tusks, and other protected wildlife are very rich people and are always wishing and wanting to bribe government agents. And by taking that firm decision and by God's grace, I think you can overcome it. And believe you, it is not easy.

We thank God that we have the Forces of Law and Order to support us, we have The Last Great Ape Organisation (LAGA) to support us and the Judiciary has been behind us. Over and above all, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle is always ready to support us. Each time we have a high profile case and we need the support of the central administration, he simply designates someone to come to the field and give us the necessary support.

Once mention is made to the hierarchy and the international community to particular cases, the traffickers immediately give up their bribery attempts.

Is corruption Hampering Conservation Efforts?

**By Olive Nahkuna Mfonfu*

Much has been said about political corruption within the government and within the business sector in general but little focus has been given to corruption in the conservation sector. Most conservation efforts are concentrated in developing countries that are rich in biodiversity. Unfortunately, countries rich in biodiversity tend to manifest poor governance. From the recently-released report by Transparency International (2008), the average corruption perceptions index (CPI) of a tropical developing country stands at 2.9 while the least corrupt countries of the world scored above 9.0. What are the relations, then, between biodiversity, conservation efforts and corruption?

And as Greg Mock of the Washington-based World Resources Institute (WRI) puts it, "Natural resources offer a rich opportunity for corruption". Nations which have abundant natural resources with their economies mainly based on the extraction and management of these resources become "fertile grounds for corruption", states as Svetianna Winbourne of Management Systems International (MSI).

Anthony L. Rose et al, (2003) points out the same cause and further outlines the consequences; "It is greed for profit that causes the timber companies to bribe new logging contracts, slice up pristine rain forests into giant logging concessions, ship tons of irreplaceable hardwood out of Africa, leave behind ruined, diminished wildlife populations". In an article published in *Nature News*, John Whitfield shows another example of the disastrous effect of corruption on biodiversity. He writes, "Efforts to conserve Indonesia's forests, for example, have been hampered by illegal logging, supported by corrupt officials despite a raft of protective legislation". Corruption, therefore, can prevent the application of a sufficient legislation and turn it into another futile conservation effort.

What makes the environmental sector distinctive from many other adds Svetianna Winbourne (MSI) is that "corruption here is triggered by large amounts of formal and informal revenues that can be gained from the products of the environment". But while examining the amounts of money generated by biodiversity exploitation we should not overlook the huge amounts of money donated to the conservation efforts themselves. Experience has shown that funds allocated for biodiversity management programmes are often diverted to private pockets through embezzlement and bribery. R. Dudley in his essay, "The Rotten Mango: The Effect of Corruption on International Development Projects", states, "Projects funded by international

development banks seem to provide easy targets for corruption". As with political corruption in government circles, NGO elites have become a new channel for embezzling of donor funds



through projects, which are rarely audited because funding for these projects are generally external or auditors are themselves part of the game or just simply because such projects do have very short life spans. R.J. Smith states, «Money that's earmarked for anti-poaching and conservation programs often ends up in the pockets of corrupt officials instead.», and R. Dudley tells us of the extend of the damage being done, "Corruption diverts perhaps 30 percent from billions of dollars spent annually for international development loans".

"Corruption diverts perhaps 30 percent from billions of dollars spent annually for international development loans".
R. Dudley

International illegal trade which is at the centre of dwindling populations of wildlife species generates billions of dollars each year and efforts to fight this illegal activity is confronted by corruption from those who benefit from it. In a study carried out on good governance and biodiversity loss, R.J. Smith et al. in the journal *Letters to Nature* state, "We found strong associations between governance scores and changes in the numbers of African elephant and black rhinoceroses". Wildlife species are declining in

areas fraught with corrupt practices, showing the negative relationship between the two. In the vein, a 2004 CITES-ETIS report (CoP13 Doc. 29.3) monitoring illegal trade in elephant ivory established the link between corruption and law

enforcement levels, "The second strongest correlation is found between the degree of corruption as measured by the CPI [corruption perception index] and the law enforcement ratio". Where the country is perceived to be corrupt, its law enforcement is weak.

Wildlife constitutes a major natural resource in Central Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. And so wildlife crime in recent times has become a modern growth industry frequently nurtured by corruption. Illegal trade in wildlife

species is continuously carried out in Cameroon despite the presence of the 1994 wildlife law which governs the wildlife sector. Michel van Hulten, co-founder of Transparency International and Head of the CHOC programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for fighting corruption in Cameroon argues, "Exporting and selling illegally obtained products from Cameroon (oil, wood) in legal markets overseas, makes it all the more difficult to eradicate corruption in Cameroon". Corruption facilitates wildlife trafficking and other natural resources and paves the way for the extinction of these biological resources. R.J. Smith declares that "The most corrupt countries are the least successful at protecting their important species and habitats". Mrs. Fosi Mary, who has served for over 10 years as technical adviser of

Cameroon's Ministry in charge of the environment (MINEF/MINEP) states, "Corruption is a practice which can undermine the process of every activity in sustainable environmental management in our society", She further observes, "We do controls for environmental norms and standards and you can be sure of corruption because when you see polluter industries, these are very rich enterprises with some of them having budgets above those of the Ministry. So it is very easy for them to corrupt the staff".

In the wildlife sector, corruption is seen to serve the private interests of bureaucrats and criminals by taking away from citizens their rights to benefit from wildlife resources for their livelihood. "These persons are filling their pockets and this at the expense of all Cameroonians because these animals don't belong to one person but to the entire country", notes Mathew Miller, Information Officer at the US Embassy in Yaounde. On her part Mrs. Fosi posits that, "When you talk of

cases of illegal wildlife trade, you must understand that the traffickers are very wealthy and are capable of corrupting government officials".

In this sector, corrupt officials have been observed issuing false government documents such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) permits or overlook illicit consignments of endangered wildlife species for bribes. Here, the people who are supposed to protect wildlife are themselves sources of its demise as Cameroon's Director of Wildlife in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife warns, "Any staff of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife who is supposed to implement the law in matters of forestry and wildlife and is caught involved in perpetuating such a crime, his fine is doubled, as to the prescription of the law".

Corruption is carried out at all levels and efforts to fight this network should be combined, all stakeholders; government, the international community and the civil society involved.

Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, states, «we should make sure the wildlife sector is void of corruption».

The international community should therefore refocus its role in the fight against corruption in the forest and wildlife sector., Robert Calderisi in his book "The Trouble with Africa: Why Foreign Aid isn't Working" (2006) states, "The complexity of corruption networks calls for an integrated and well coordinated approach of destroying them". And R.J. Smith et al. argue that there is "the need for the conservation community to develop approaches that offset the effects of poor governance". Because as Smith argues, pouring more money into a corrupt system is not the way out «If the money isn't getting through, sending more money isn't going to help».

The Fight against Corruption – can the Civil Society Play a role?

By Anna Egbe

Article 13 of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption for which Cameroon is a signatory stipulates that countries should actively promote the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the fight against corruption. Public participation in the eradication of corruption is a necessary condition if any meaningful corruption fight is to be launched. Of what benefit will it be for those who dishonestly gain from a system to change that system? Without the impetus of the public, those corrupt officials within the system whether in government, private sector or even the development sector itself, will continuously want to maintain the status quo since this benefits them directly or indirectly. This necessitates the presence of a third party that stands on higher moral grounds and this is the civil society. True, this cannot be without strong resistance from the old cronies who are profiteers of the corruption business. But with a firm, dedicated and resilient approach, the civil society can eventually move forward, creating a momentum in the society to fight rather than face with fatalism the corruption problem.

Non Governmental Organizations and the fight against corruption

Civil society is composed of the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state and commercial institutions of the market. In our present context the dominant part of the civil society is non governmental organizations (NGOs).

The traditional role of NGOs in the fight against corruption has been focusing mainly on sensitization and advocacy. NGOs confine themselves within the framework of sensitizing all those involved in the corruption chain and the public at large, of the negative and destructive effects of corruption. They advocate for change of behaviour and the creation of institutions that fight corruption. Some try to use the name and shame approach or organize multiple workshops and research further into the corruption phenomenon.

While sensitization maybe necessary, it is nevertheless, insufficient to tackle and solve the problem. Identifying and talking about the problem does not seem to be sufficient for its solution. Knowledge about corruption in itself has very little value if not used to effectively wage war against corruption. Experience shows that the existence of state institutions to fight corruption does not mean an effective fight is on. In any case, the presence or continuous increase in the numbers of non governmental organizations purporting to fight corruption illustrates the inability or the failure of state structures to come to grip with the problem. And the persistence of the corruption problem means the methods used today by non governmental organizations are failing. Corruption in Cameroon, relies not much on the inability to know as on the inability to act. The question is therefore asked, can NGOs still be relevant in the fight against corruption? Can NGOs reinvent their approaches and find a role they can play effectively?

When Corruption hits the law

One of the most serious harms of corruption can

be observed when it attacks the very mechanism built to fight it. Corruption wrecks State organs creating the laws and erodes the legal and judicial systems entrusted with applying and enforcing the laws. Enormous effort is put by governments, civil society and the international community to build structures and mechanisms to fight corruption. With the lack of proper application and enforcement, these efforts are rendered futile. When a law can not be applied it becomes irrelevant, for the intrinsic value of a law lies in its application. John Whitfield of *Nature News* says, "Efforts to conserve Indonesia's forests, for example, have been hampered by illegal logging, supported by corrupt officials despite a raft of protective legislation". The Indonesian case is just one example of many, where years of efforts are invested in building up an extensive legislation only to realize that corruption prevents its application.

A similar failure of law application and enforcement was observed in Cameroon with the lack of proper application of the wildlife law. For close to a decade following the introduction of a wildlife law in 1994, not even a single prosecution was made. This law was continuously broken by offenders without any prosecution whatsoever. Interestingly, this situation was shared with almost all Central and West African countries where international trafficking in endangered wildlife has its epicentre. The root cause for the non-enforcement of the law within such a long period has been found to be corruption. Illegal wildlife trade blossomed thanks to corrupt practices. Wildlife law enforcement took back seat as illegal wildlife trade grew steadily. These hard facts exposed the failure of conserva-

tion efforts. Corruption hinders every activity in every sector and the conservation sector can not be exempted.

The case of The Last Great Ape Organisation

The failure of wildlife law enforcement backed by corruption, warranted new ideas in tackling the issue. The case of The Last Great Ape Organisation (LAGA) shows how, in a unique way, a novel approach was provided for wildlife law enforcement in a country that went for close to a decade without the law being applied. It was abundantly clear that any effort to enforce the law will be futile if the corruption problem was to be left untouched.

The failure of law enforcement and application was seen by LAGA as “a symptom of the failure of the Aid business and its inability to tackle the first obstacle to development – corruption”, states Ofir Drori, Director of LAGA. LAGA’s analysis of the problem identified corruption as the main obstacle for wildlife law enforcement. LAGA then went ahead to explore new ways to tackle corruption issues as an NGO and prove Civil Society Organizations can and should develop a much more demanding and innovative approach in tackling corruption. A complex challenge as corruption necessitates a multi-aspect approach, and may justify exploring new roles NGOs can play in the fight.

Designed to establish effective enforcement of existing wildlife law, LAGA became an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process. Its main challenge can be seen through its statistics: bribing attempts are documented in 85% of its field arrest operations, and 80% of all court cases within the legal system. But LAGA is not an observer of corruption; it was created to fight corruption, redirecting the positive pressures existing within the system, usually wasted in large conferences, to specific corruption attempts and the field realities that form corruption.

LAGA took the approach of zero tolerance towards corruption. It tried to systematically identify corrupt practices which may block the law enforcement process and furiously fight them heads on at every step of the process. The attempt was made to follow-up the process from the beginning to the end. From investigations to field operations including the arrest and detention of offenders to the legal procedures up to the prosecution of offenders and their imprisonment, it was set to ensure that each stage was protected from the harms of corruption. Each wildlife case was a new field for checking and fighting corruption within it. LAGA carried its fight against corruption to direct confrontation with corrupt

officials while forcing the system to duly solve its corruption problems.

The UNEP manual on the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA) describes the case of LAGA as a model for such implementation and explains how a government – NGO relationship can be built to face up to challenges in an innovative approach which ultimately culminates in tangible results. The UNEP manual states, “The institutions have

“LAGA has gained legitimacy from through its relationship with the Government of Cameroon and leveraged its position to contribute to the fight against corruption within enforcement and judicial processes”
Niels Marquardt, Former US Ambassador to Cameroon

proceeded carefully with the collaboration, since law enforcement is historically a governmental function. Accordingly, NGOs in Cameroon traditionally have not participated directly in the enforcement of wildlife or other environmental laws. This innovative experiment has highlighted ways that NGOs can collaborate constructively with Governments to improve the enforcement of wildlife laws”. The commitment of the



Cameroon’s Forestry and Wildlife Ministry was necessary and the Minister states, “anybody in the administration side who is engaged in anyway in complicity fuelled by corruption with those who violate the wildlife law will be punished and sanctioned like those trafficking in wildlife”.

The results of the experiment were forthcoming. Seven months after its registration, LAGA brought about the first wildlife prosecution in Cameroon. From 2006, every week a major illegal wildlife dealer is arrested, 87% of these are behind bars from the moment of arrest with no bail granted. Prosecutions are satisfying and have reached the maximum jail term of 3 years.

Damages awarded to the State have reached \$35,000 (about 17 million CFA francs) for a wildlife case.

Will Travers CEO of Born Free Foundation noted the added value of LAGA as a model, “LAGA has built success upon success in recent years and serves as a model for law enforcement NGOs throughout Africa”. Through the RALF project of The ASPINALL Foundation, the LAGA model is now being replicated in the Republic of Congo, bringing about the first wildlife prosecution in the country within merely six months of work. Other countries are requesting for similar collaboration. The Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) has also recommended the LAGA model to all member states which it saw as a rare example of the application the African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) Declaration in the wildlife sector.

This unique approach received acknowledgement from the UN Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) when for the first time, LAGA as an NGO received from the Secretary General of the convention the Bavin Award for outstanding achievements in wildlife law enforcement. In the same CITES meeting Cameroon received the Interpol Ecomessage award for a large scale ivory trafficking investigation it carried together with LAGA.

It should be noted that such a process can not be successful if the civil society is not aggressive in its fight against corruption and Cathy Liss, President of Animal Welfare Institute states, “LAGA, working on the ground and with local enforcement authorities, has proven immensely successful at uncovering sophisticated smuggling operations ... and has been directly responsible for the seizure of smuggled goods, arrest of perpetrators and public exposure of corrupt officials”.

Niels Marquardt, former US Ambassador to Cameroon sums up the value of LAGA’s experience in a larger context, “LAGA has gained legitimacy from through its relationship with the Government of Cameroon and leveraged its position to contribute to the fight against corruption within enforcement and judicial processes”. Most lessons that can be drawn from LAGA’s work are not restricted to wildlife or conservation sectors. Poor enforcement and application of the law is behind various development problems in Africa and more should be done to use similar case studies to explore new ways to fight corruption.

British High Commissioner Decries Corruption in the Environment Sector

By Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu

The importance of government corruption as an explanation for environmental degradation gained popularity with the drastic decline of forests and certain species of wildlife in the 1970s and 80s (Myers et al. 1979 in Barrett C. et al. 2005). These researchers and writers speak of corruption to mean *bad officials, politicians, bureaucrats [or] some combination of the foregoing groups...* With the link, so far established by researchers between corruption and conservation, donor organizations and governments in developed countries are presently assisting governments in developing countries to fight corruption in the environment sector.

Wildlife Justice sought to know from the British High Commissioner in Yaounde, His Excellency Syd Madicott, how his government is assisting the government of Cameroon in fighting corruption in the wildlife sector.

Excerpts:

Syd Madicott: We have very good working relationship with the Minister; the Minister is very vigorous in trying to tackle corruption in the forestry sector in which we are very closely involved.

The British Government is one of the major donors to the forestry sector through a number of financing mechanisms including today's government's forestry and environment sector programme with other Ambassadors, members of the Minister's team, the National Control Brigade and independent observers and partners in the forestry sector.

We attempt to assist the Ministry to ensure that the law is enforced correctly.



*His Excellency Syd Madicott
British High Commissioner*

What is your collaboration in this domain with other diplomatic missions?

Syd Madicott: Also, when we become aware of corrupt practices we certainly alert the Minister and the British High Commission along with other diplomatic missions here, notably the Canadian High Commission, the Italian Embassy and the European Union Commission Delegation has also been very active in the Ministry.

What is the nature of your support to the wildlife sector?

Syd Madicott: On the wildlife front we support the activities of LAGA your organisation we have actually financed LAGA in a number of projects.

We also support primate sanctuaries. We've helped build expanded areas for national parks. We take interest in the primate rescue activities in Cameroon. I also have to say the Bristol zoo has been closely involved with Cameroon's wildlife aid that helps support the national park. So again, there is a lot of British connection in the wildlife sector.

How did you react to this high profile case involving illegal trade in African grey parrots?

Syd Madicott: On some of the specific cases that we have been aware of is the case of the illegal trade in African grey parrots that were due to be exported.

I personally involved myself in encouraging the Minister to deal with this case and I am pleased to say the Minister has earned a lot of applause both at home and abroad for this very good action that he took but we all need to keep up the effort to make sure that the Cameroon wildlife sector remains clean.

CHIMPDEALER ARRESTED IN DOUALA

A dealer in totally protected wildlife species was arrested in Douala, Littoral Region on March 10, 2009 while trying to sell a killed chimpanzee. The chimpanzee is reported to have been killed in the Ebo Forest Reserve of the Nkam Division of the Littoral Region.

The operation that led to his arrest was carried out by the National Control Brigade of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife with the participation of the Littoral Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife. This, in collaboration with the Forces of Law and Order, the Judiciary and The Last Great Ape Organisation – LAGA.

Increasing trade in primates is said to be a major threat to their survival. It is in record, for example, that 4 000 chimpanzees are killed yearly for illegal trade and that, as such, the population of chimpanzee for instance has dropped from 12 000 to 1 200 in Ivory Coast within the past few years.



Wildlife law enforcement officers carry the carcass of the killed chimpanzee

"If we believe you are benefiting from corruption in the wildlife and forestry sector you will never go to the United States"

Mathew Miller, Information Officer, US Embassy, Yaounde



*Mathew Miller, Information Officer,
US Embassy*

The World Bank once made stamping out corruption in poor countries the cornerstone to what it hoped would be its legacy. With the persistence of the culture of corruption, Reymond Fisman et al. (2008) in their book, *"Economic Gangsters – Corruption, Violence and Poverty of Nations"*, quote the ex-President of the World Bank Paul Wolfowitz, as advising diplomats that, *"right response is not to give up"*, adding that such a culture could, *"be changed, albeit with creativity, ingenuity and great effort"*. This is how the American government today sees increasing wildlife crime which goes with the forging of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) documents being carried out with the complicity of corrupt government agents. In other words, the American government sees this new crime which goes hand-in-glove with corruption as a big problem and a threat to the survival of protected wildlife species and so has joint forces in fighting the crimes.

The Information Officer at the US Embassy, Mathew Miller in an interview with Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu and Eric Kaba Tah, presented the position of their government with regards to the fight against corruption and crimes in the wildlife sector.

Excerpts:

Why is the American government promoting good governance in the forest and wildlife sector?

Mathew Miller: US Embassy is promoting good governance throughout all sectors in Cameroonian society, but we think that the wildlife and forestry sectors are particularly important because we see

these as one area that is extremely important for the Cameroonian economy and to future Cameroonians.

Cameroon is well known to have a tremendous amount of natural resources be they trees, wildlife, minerals or biodiversity, and so the proper use of

these important natural resources is what is going to determine the future of Cameroon.

What is particularly unique to the wildlife and forestry sector is that if it is poorly used it is lost forever; if the animal becomes extinct, it's gone forever and if an old growth forest is cut down it takes centuries to rebuild it.

So this is an area if not well governed, these resources can be lost forever and that is why we think this is the most crucial sector.

How is your government helping fight corruption in the forest and wildlife sector?

Mathew Miller: We are trying to fight corruption in all sectors, but we do believe that the forest and wildlife sector is particularly important.

The first aspect for us is to make sure that we are not the source country in the demand for illegal forest or wildlife products. So we work closely with the Cameroon government to try to, as much as possible, decrease the demand. For example, United States government convicted Tania Siyam to 5 years imprisonment and ordered her to pay a fine of 100 000 US dollars (about 50 million CFA francs). This was in relation to an illegal wildlife trade. She was shipping and exporting ivory derived from killing at least 23 elephants from Cameroon to the United States and Canada.

US companies are also prohibited from paying bribes to people to get contracts either to log wood or hunt wildlife. We have laws and if we believe that those carrying out corrupt practices in the forestry and wildlife sector, they will be prosecuted in the United States.

In Cameroon, we do a number of different things. One of the things that the US government does is that we have a tool that helps to refuse visa to any people that we believe are guilty of corruption into the US. A special aspect of the law encourages us to ban people who are benefiting from corruption within the forestry and wildlife sector from obtaining visa to travel to the United States.

If we think that you are benefiting from corruption within the wildlife and forestry sector, you will never go to the US.

ALARMING DECLINE IN CHIMP POPULATION

Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany have expressed fears that chimpanzees may soon get extinct if the current rate of exploitation through illegal trade is not addressed. The institute has given an estimate of about 4000 chimpanzees killed each year for illegal commercial trade.

The researchers found that the population of endangered West African chimpanzees in Ivory Coast has fallen by about 90% in the last 20 years. In October 2008, they discovered 90% of fewer nests than a similar audit carried out in 1990, which suggested the chimp population had crashed from 12 000 and 1 200.

According to BBC reports on the research results, Ivory Coast is believed to be a one-time home to between 8000 and 12 000 individuals. This estimate was based on a nationwide survey carried out in 1989 and 1990.

"Our results show that there has been an alarming decline in chimpanzee numbers and that action is required to prevent them disappearing entirely", states Christophe Boesch of Max Planck Institute, adding *"we were expecting a decrease but not such a dramatic one"*.

He concluded that if a global conservation effort was not forthcoming, then the prognosis was grim.

Legislation

" You could conjecture from the conduct of a judge that he or she is being influenced by other motives which are not legal"

Barrister Mbuan Sulesco – wildlife prosecution lawyer.

By Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu

Experience has shown that deficiencies in effective wildlife law enforcement are expressed in insufficient penalties by the judiciary due to corruption. Imposing insufficient penalties results in demoralized law enforcement officers and provides lesser deterrence to wildlife criminals.

In an interview with Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu, one of the prosecution lawyers of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), Barrister Mbuan Sulesco highlights the seriousness of wildlife crime at the judicial level.

Excerpts

How can corrupt practices in court procedures be spotted out?

It is actually difficult to come up with a clear indication that there is corruption being manifested here and there in court procedures on wildlife cases. But you could conjecture from the conduct of a judge or a magistrate that he or she is being influenced by other motives which are not legal. And there, the temptation may be that it may be out of humanitarian feelings. But on the other hand, it could be motivated by undue influence, may be political influence; may be money has changed hands; maybe there is a kind of undue familiarity between the Legal Department and the suspect which pushes the Department to operate outside the legal framework.

The reason why I say it is actually difficult is because if you look at the present penal code, for instance, in the area of wildlife law enforcement, that is the area where most of the offences are committed, *flagrant delicto*, which means the suspects are arrested at the time they are committing the offence or just after the offence has been committed. Now since they are offences where the offenders have just been caught red-handed, the law even empowers the judicial police officer on their own to remand the suspect, and the Legal Department too has that power to even remand the suspect, pending the summary trial that is going to follow.

But section 114 of the criminal procedure code states that the state counsel could decide to remand the suspect and prosecute him or her from custody or decide to release him on bail with or without surety. But what we normally experience is that immediately the matter is brought up, the person is first remanded, giving the impression that the Legal Department intends to prosecute the person from custody.

But after 2 or 3 days, you find the suspect being admitted to bail. Well, the Legal Department has operated within the ambit of the law. The law has given him that power. The problem now is, looking at the number of cases we have, we ask ourselves, is the Legal Department convinced that,

the bail is working in the interest of justice? Strictly speaking, they will tell you that bail in *flagrant delicto* offence is defeating the purpose of summary trial.

That notwithstanding immediately somebody is admitted to bail in the case of summary trial, they now start operating on delay tactics and you find them asking long adjournment, in the final analysis, a matter that is supposed to be tried summarily takes a long time. Such procedures portray symptoms of corruption.

But what does the law state?

The chimpanzee is a class A animal which is a totally protected animal. In fact, there is no "transaction" or negotiation, as far as this class of animal is concerned. The fine alone which is provided by section 158 of the 1994 wildlife law ranges from 3 to 10 million CFA francs and or an imprisonment of from 1 to 3 years.

Now for a lenient magistrate who wants to operate within the ambit of the law, there is no way out that if you want to give any imprisonment term you will go below 1 year and there is no way out that if you want to impose a fine within that legal framework you will give the person less than 3 million CFA francs because that is the legal framework that you have been given.



But sometimes you find a judge giving 6 months suspended sentence. But then, you begin to question, does this 6-month sentence fall within the legal sanctions that are contained in the 1994 wildlife law? We say no! Some even give ridiculous fines of 50 000 CFA francs. We have some cases like that which were delivered in Bafoussam which are now on appeal because they were not backed up by the law.

What do you propose for upright judges or magistrates who pass objective judgements over wildlife cases?

I am of the opinion that the names of such magistrates could be communicated to the high judicial council by the competent authorities of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF)

as exemplary magistrates.

The reason I am saying so is because what is clear is that the wildlife traffickers, even though people are looking at them in terms of dealing in trophies such as lion or leopard skins, these fellows are very rich and that is how they penetrated the judicial family.

But if somebody can stand up and apply the law irrespective of the offer that is being made, I am of the opinion that something should be done in terms of their promotion, and the competent authority of MINFOF should actually make some strong and positive recommendations as far as their career is concerned. It will help to spur them up because they have rejected what others are collecting.

Trafficking in Protected Wildlife Species

The Director of a timber company called Scerie Mbam et Kim – S.M.K., based in Mbam and Kim Division of the Centre Region has been arrested for illegally keeping 3 live chimpanzees and a crocodile skin. A case file has been established against him.

The timber company director of Italian nationality was arrested on May 14, 2009 during an operation assigned by the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife. The team comprised officials drawn from the National Control Brigade of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, the Forces of Law and Order, the Judiciary and The Last Great Ape Organisation – LAGA .

The law stipulates that anyone found in possession of part of dead or live protected wildlife species including chimpanzees and crocodiles, is liable to a prison term of up to 3 years and or a fine of up to 10 million CFA francs.

In the past, another manager in a logging company, of Greek nationality was arrested in Nanga Eboko in the Upper Sanaga Division of the Centre Province for illegally keeping in his home 2 live chimpanzees and other protected wildlife species including African grey parrots.

Similarly, a worker of another logging company, the Mvas Sawwill in Campo, Ocean Division was recently sentenced to 3 months imprisonment and ordered by the court to pay as fine and damages to government the sum of about 1.5 million CFA francs for trading in parts of crocodile and elephant teeth.

The operation comes at a time when the government and the International community are renewing pressure on logging companies to meet their legal responsibilities by controlling their facilities and workers against illegal hunting and related trade.