

Wildlife conservation, sustainable development in spotlight at UN-backed conference

23 October 2017 – Unless the international community integrates wildlife conservation with sustainable development, it will not be able to protect the remaining animal species on Earth, the head of a United Nations-backed environmental treaty today said at the opening of a wildlife conference in the Philippines.

“Development without a regard for the environment is not sustainable. Their future is our future,” [said](#) the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Brandee Chambers, in a press conference on the opening day of the Twelfth Meeting of countries that have joined CMS.

The week-long event is being billed as “the year’s largest wildlife conference,” and is for the first time being convened in Asia since the treaty was adopted in Germany in 1979.

More than 1,000 delegates from 120 countries are expected for the five-day conference that will focus on protecting some of the most vulnerable animals in the world, such as the whale shark, which is the world’s largest fish with a rapidly declining population due to fishing, illegal poaching, and other human activity.

Among other animals that the hundreds of governments, civil society and private sector representatives, and experts will discuss are ten species of vultures and the Steppe Eagle, which are threatened with extinction, and the giraffe, which is not safeguarded by any convention.

Participants are also expected to strengthen their work with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to conserve African carnivores, such as the African lion, the cheetah, the leopard, and the African wild dog.

These proposals are among the 31 to be discussed at the conference, affecting at least 35 different species.

The theme of this year’s conference is “Their Future is Our Future Sustainable Development for Wildlife & People,” and links to the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to alleviate poverty and hunger, while improving health and education, and protecting oceans and forests.

At today’s press conference, Mr. Chambers spoke alongside Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment, CITES Secretary General, John Scanlon, and UN Environment Goodwill Ambassadors, Nadya Hutagalung and Yann Arthus-Bertrand, along with the Philippines Department of Environment and

Natural Resources Director, Roy Cimato.

"Our wildlife is not an optional extra, but the basis upon which all our livelihoods and progress depend," Mr. Chambers [said](#) in a press release later in the day.