

## MARE NOSTRUM GREEN Zone

**Side event: "Elephants as tools to mitigate climate change thanks to their key role in the formation of savanna and jungle ecosystems".  
December 13th: 13.00 h - 13.45 h**

Elephant's conservation exemplifies two of the greatest environmental challenges nowadays: wildlife extinctions and climate change. As umbrella species Elephants help mitigate climate change thanks to their key role in the conservation of savanna and jungle ecosystems, one of the most important in the planet in providing carbon sequestration services. For example, a recent study has shown that carbon storage capacity of Central Africa forests is positively influenced by the presence of elephants, as they favour the development of large trees with denser wood. According to this study, the extinction of forest elephants would result in a 7% reduction of carbon sequestration within the forests of this region.

However, despite the fact that the elephant is an emblematic species, its populations are being slaughtered at an accelerated rate to obtain their ivory as a commercial sale product. In the mid-1970s, it was estimated that in Africa there were about 1.34 million elephants; less than fifty years later, in 2016 it is estimated that only around half a million remain. It is estimated that around 30,000 elephants are killed by poachers each year.

To curb this killing, international collaboration is essential to guide an effective fight against poaching. Therefore, in the framework of the European Union strategic approach "Larger than Elephants" aimed at conserving biodiversity in Africa, and of the Spanish Action Plan against poaching and illegal trafficking of wildlife species (TIFIES Plan), the MITECO will present a new initiative based in the technological modernisation and support of the local environmental guards (Ecoguards Program), to help curb the decline of elephants, particularly in Africa, and to fight more effectively against illegal ivory trafficking.

Specifically, new technologies to fight against the killing and illegal trafficking of elephants used by the enforcement agencies and the environmental guards will be presented, particularly: the use of Radiocarbon 14 technique as a tool to date the age of ivory and thus detect and avoid illegal trade, the provision of dog patrols (one to operate in Spain and other in Congo-Brazzaville in collaboration with the Civil Guard Nature Protection Service –Seprona-) for the detection of ivory and other wildlife products at border points; the training and provision of equipment such as new technologies to the local environmental guards (eco-guards and wildlife scouts) of several African countries; and the use of a new technological solution for satellite detection of death events of elephant, which will provide environmental guards with an early warning system that will help them to locate and quickly access remote areas where the corpses of poached elephants are detected.

In this way, the Ecoguards Program will be presented as an ambitious initiative to support local environmental guards, to protect wildlife from extinction and to maintain the main carbon sinks in Africa.

Discussion table on "**Elephants as tools to mitigate climate change thanks to their key role in the formation of savanna and jungle ecosystems**".

### **Program:**

Welcome introduction

Speaker interventions

Questions

### **Moderator:**

Javier Cachón de Mesa. Director General for Biodiversity and Environmental Quality. Ministry for the Ecological Transition.

### **Speakers:**

José Vicente López-Bao, University of Oviedo.

Richard Kapere, Manager, Planning & Climate Change Focal Point. Uganda Wildlife Authority.

José María Galán, National Park of Doñana, Junta de Andalucía.

