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TWIX (Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange) is an online tool developed to facilitate the exchange of information and promote co-operation between law enforcement agencies responsible for combating illegal wildlife trade and implementing CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). To date, regional TWIX systems have been established in Europe and Central Africa.

The TWIX system consists of two main components: a centralised restricted access website which holds records on national, regional and international wildlife seizures; and a mailing list which allows enforcement officials to communicate, seek assistance and alert one another to relevant enforcement actions. The TWIX website also contains various resources such as identification guides, training materials and useful directories, including listings for animal rescue centres for seized specimens.

The mandate for the establishment of a TWIX system for the Southern African region emanates from the Southern African Development Community (SADC¹) Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP²) Strategy that aims to reduce the level of poaching and illegal trade in wild fauna and flora and enhance law enforcement capacity in the SADC region by 2021, focusing on:

- enhancement of legislation and judicial processes;
- minimisation of wildlife crime and illegal trade;
- improvement and strengthening of field protection;
- integration of people and nature in natural resources management; and
- ensuring sustainable trade and use of natural resources.

The LEAP strategy was approved by Ministers responsible for Environment and Natural Resources of the Member States of SADC in 2015 and endorsed by the Joint Committee of Ministers of Environment and Natural Resources and of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in 2017. The LEAP strategy explicitly identifies the establishment of the TWIX system as one of its key deliverables.

Development of the SADC-TWIX system for the region is based on experience drawn from the highly successful EU-TWIX³ that has been operational since 2005 and connects more than a thousand enforcement officials dealing with CITES issues in 38 European countries (28 EU Member States and 10 neighbouring countries). The EU-TWIX database maintains information on almost 60,000 wildlife seizures.

The TWIX for the Southern African region shares its development with the AFRICA-TWIX⁴ platform, which connects more than 100 officials from six countries of the COMIFAC (Commission des Forêts d’Afrique Centrale) region, namely Cameroon, Central African Republic,

TWIX for the Southern African Region



PROMOTING INFORMATION SHARING



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▲ **Seizure of 370 tortoises (Radiated Tortoises *Astrochelys radiata* and Ploughshare Tortoises *A. yniphora*), en route to Ha Noi, Viet Nam, via Nairobi, Kenya, and intercepted by Customs at Ivato International Airport, Madagascar, on 26 June 2018.**

Chad⁵, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Gabon. AFRICA-TWIX has facilitated several enforcement actions in Central Africa—for example, seven suspected wildlife traffickers from local freight services and Customs were arrested following information sharing and collaboration via AFRICA-TWIX concerning a seizure of 28 elephant tusks in Bangkok in late 2017; and collaborative investigations by INTERPOL and Congolese authorities have been triggered by information exchanged on AFRICA-TWIX.

Once operational, TWIX for the Southern African region will facilitate information exchange as well as strengthen inter-agency and cross-border co-operation amongst law enforcement agencies in the region in fighting wildlife crime, and in turn enhance the success of law enforcement efforts.

¹The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a Regional Economic Community comprising 16 Member States; Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Established in 1992, SADC is committed to Regional Integration and poverty eradication within Southern Africa through economic development and ensuring peace and security. Source: <https://www.sadc.int/about-sadc/>; ²<https://dc.sourceafrica.net/documents/26991-SADC-Law-Enforcement-and-Anti-Poaching-Strategy.html>; ³EU-TWIX: <https://www.eu-twix.org/>; ⁴AFRICA-TWIX: <https://www.africa-twix.org/>; ⁵<https://www.traffic.org/news/chad-joins-africa-twix/>

**Participants at the SADC-TWIX meeting, ▼
Johannesburg, in April 2019.**



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February 2018, during which time three phases of SADC-Member State visits, or scoping missions, have been conducted. During each visit, the establishment of a TWIX system was discussed with relevant agencies and each law enforcement agency was invited to nominate a TWIX focal point and users.

These country visits resulted in 70 agencies from 10 countries expressing their interest and commitment in joining a TWIX system. They include agencies from: Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia. Furthermore, agencies of the Seychelles have also shown interest in joining a TWIX system.

The growth in understanding of the TWIX system and appreciation of the support that it can provide to

AND CO-OPERATION TO REDUCE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN SADC REGION

Recent years have seen numerous international commitments made between African nations concerning wildlife conservation and sustainable wildlife trade. The implementation of TWIX is in part a response to such regional and international recommendations and declarations and an effort to support signatories to fulfil their obligations and assist in their implementation. Declarations and Commitments that the Southern African TWIX is helping to support include:

- London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade Declaration⁶;
- The Arusha Declaration on Regional Conservation and Combating Wildlife/Environmental Crime⁷;
- Kasane Statement on the Illegal Wildlife Trade⁸;
- African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa⁹;
- The SADC Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching (LEAP) Strategy and the action plan for its implementation.

Officials eligible to participate include, amongst others, those working within Customs, CITES Management Authorities, wildlife and forestry services, police, prosecutors, criminal justice departments and international organisations such as the CITES Secretariat, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, World Customs Organization (WCO), the Lusaka Task Force Agreement (LATF) and the WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices (RILO).

The process of setting up a TWIX system for the Southern African region has been under way since

front-line enforcement officials was further strengthened through a TWIX workshop organised under the auspices of the SADC Secretariat in September 2018, which was attended by 14 of the 16 SADC Member States. The meeting recommended that TRAFFIC should develop and manage TWIX on behalf of law enforcement agencies of the SADC Member States and through a parallel process, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the SADC Secretariat and TRAFFIC should be developed to formalise the collaboration and working arrangement on TWIX implementation.

Ahead of the launch of the system in early May 2019, close to 400 future TWIX users have been nominated by various law enforcement agencies (including Customs, police, wildlife and fisheries services and the judiciary).

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⁶<https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/news/sundry/2014/london-wildlife-conference-declaration-140213.pdf>;

⁷https://www.internationalconservation.org/publications/Arusha_Declaration_Regional_Conservation_Combating_Wildlife_Environmental_Crime.pdf; ⁸https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417231/kasane-statement-150325.pdf; ⁹https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33796-doc-african_strategy_strategy_africaine_au.pdf

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