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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Committee on Foreign Affairs Hearing:
“Advancing Effective Conservation Policy Worldwide: Successes, Challenges, and
Next Steps”
May 22, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

“One of the great things about America is that we strive to be better. We work hard and innovate to create better opportunities. We recognize a responsibility to leave future generations better off.

It’s this mindset that birthed the modern conservation movement – a movement that Teddy Roosevelt aptly deemed ‘democratic in spirit, purpose, and method.’ Indeed, even before the Founding Fathers, Americans had long believed that this country’s abundant resources should not be available just to the well-off, but to everyone.

Of course, as Roosevelt and other leaders in the late 19th century realized, America’s resources were not limitless. Smart development and conservation would be necessary to protect our natural treasures. Yellowstone, the world’s first national park, soon followed.

Today, we know that these aren’t just U.S. issues – they are global issues. By helping others conserve their natural heritage, we ensure a brighter future for our own children – so many who are captivated by elephants and rhinos and cheetahs and other majestic species – while also helping improve the lives of millions who call places like southern Africa’s Okavango River Basin home.

As a member of this committee, I have long worked to use this platform to make a difference in this fight. I remember when we were drafting the Congo Basin Forest Partnership legislation back in 2002, following a trip then-Secretary Colin Powell made to that awe-inspiring landscape. John Tanner and I launched the International Conservation Caucus in the House as a means to build support for the effort.

Back then, the interest was limited. Only a handful of my colleagues appreciated the link between good natural resource management, sound economic growth and national security. Today, the ICC is one of the largest bipartisan caucuses on Capitol Hill.

The ICC was critical to enacting the END Wildlife Trafficking Act in 2016 to help combat unprecedented levels of wildlife poaching and trafficking. Indeed, estimated at \$10 billion a year, wildlife trafficking is one of the largest black markets in the world, benefitting terrorist groups like the Lord’s Resistance Army and al-Shabaab.

To help bolster our national security, the END Wildlife Trafficking Act rightfully put trafficking of threatened species on par with weapons and drug trafficking as threats. And it has helped to empower law enforcement and park rangers on the front lines. Last fall, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service successfully completed Operation Jungle Book in Southern California, the biggest wildlife trafficking bust in state history.

As the U.S. has pushed forward, others have followed. China is to be commended for taking steps to follow through on its domestic ivory market ban, announced in 2017. Few predicted such progress. Similar bans are pending in Hong Kong and Singapore. And the U.K. recently announced its strictest ivory ban to date.

But many challenges remain. Later, we'll be marking up legislation that will help Southern Africa's critical Okavango River Basin. This magnificent but fragile inland delta supports more than one million people and the largest remaining population of wild elephants in Africa. Alarming, unwise development and wildlife poaching are threatening to destroy the communities that rely on responsible management of the watershed.

Like we did with the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, our goal with the DELTA Act is to strengthen coordination among the key players in the region. Wildlife and water don't know borders. For conservation to be impactful we need governments, NGOs, and the private sector all working together. Our world's well-being depends on this and many more such efforts."