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Illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The illegal trade of wildlife and wildlife products is one of the most profitable illicit trafficking markets in the world. For many decades, this crime was neglected by international action. A growing amount of evidence shows that illegal trade in wildlife is often run by organized crime syndicates, damaging local ecosystems and fueling poverty, corruption and economic degradation. Assessing and combatting illegal trade in wildlife is difficult and requires international cooperation and coordination.

The United Nations has recently recognized the significance of this issue and the threat it poses to ecosystems around the world. Ever since, addressing the problem has been a key priority for the UN under the Sustainable Development Goals and through the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UN efforts to combat wildlife crime have resulted in a slight decrease in the number of seizures. However, to stop illicit trafficking before it does irreparable damage to wildlife, stricter measurements and further cooperation are necessary.

I. Introduction

1. Global flora and fauna are crucial to human development and well-being. As the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) reaffirmed, wildlife “in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the Earth which must be protected for this generation and the generations to come”. Humanity resides in ecosystems that rely on biodiversity, and illicit trafficking of wildlife poses a significant hazard to the delicate balance of nature.
2. The definition of ‘wildlife crime’ is contested; it is not defined in any internationally accepted treaty. However, in 2014, an issue of the *Illicit Wildlife Trafficking* by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) referred to ‘wildlife crime’ as a phrase “understood to refer to any environment-related crime that involves the poaching, capture, collection or processing of animals and plants taken in contravention of national laws, and any subsequent trade in such animals and plants, including their derivatives or products.”¹ Therefore, the term ‘wildlife crime’ pertains not only to luxury products such as ivory or hides, but also includes the illegal trade of fisheries and timber, which make up the majority of trade in natural goods.²
3. Wildlife crimes pose an international threat because they involve a complex set of illegal activities and affect the wildlife of many Member States. Examples of wildlife crimes include hunting elephants for ivory, illegal logging and smuggling endangered plants. Alongside drug, arms and human trafficking, wildlife and forest crimes have become a predominant illicit trafficking activity. It is estimated that wildlife and forest crime raises a profit between \$10 and \$23 billion annually, rendering it the fourth-most profitable illegitimate trade.³ ⁴ Noting this alarming scale, the trafficking of wildlife has been increasingly recognized as a specialized area of organized crime and a significant threat to plant and animal species.⁵
4. The rise of illicit wildlife trade is driving many species to local or global extinction.⁶ Although the traditional driver of wildlife crime was poverty, there is growing intelligence and evidence to show that militias, terrorist groups and international crime syndicates use wildlife to finance their illicit actions globally. The impact of illicit wildlife trade is truly alarming: “animals like the tiger, feared and revered throughout human history, are now hanging on by a thread, their dwindling

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Illicit Wildlife Trafficking: An Environmental, Economic and Social Issue*, <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/7466>

² United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.

³ United Nations Environment Programme, *The Rise of Environmental Crime: A Growing Threat to Natural Resources Peace, Development and Security*<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/7662>

⁴ United Nations Environment Programme, *Illicit Wildlife Trafficking: An Environmental, Economic and Social Issue*, <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/7466>

⁵ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.

⁶ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 326 (2017)

numbers spread across a range of states that are struggling to protect them.”⁷ Furthermore, due to corruption, ecotourism and poaching, rural livelihoods and indigenous communities are also under threat. Given that wildlife crime has a destructive effect on environmental integrity and cultural and economic development, it should be considered a global threat and addressed accordingly.

5. Due to the complexity of illicit wildlife trafficking and its transnational ties, this global challenge requires a coordinated reaction from the international community. However, global wildlife trafficking is under-assessed as a serious crime affecting biodiversity and human lives.
6. The UN first addressed wildlife exploitation through the World Charter for Nature, adopted on 28 October 1982.⁸ The Charter provided guidelines on the protection and preservation of all life forms and their natural habitats. The Charter also established five general principles to guide human interaction with nature. The Charter further stated that wildlife shall only be utilized by mankind if such usage can maintain optimum sustainable productivity. Therefore, human interactions with wildlife should never jeopardize the ecosystems of other species. Furthermore, the Charter highlighted that nature should be defended from any form of degradation caused by war or other hostile activities. Although the Charter did not specifically define wildlife crime as a significant problem, it raised awareness about misconduct against flora and fauna.
7. Signed on 3 March 1973, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international arrangement between governments and one of the biggest conservation agreements to date. 183 Member States have joined this partnership. Although CITES is not a convention directly adopted by the UN, the UN has supported and collaborated with CITES in its governance of illicit wildlife trade. The Secretariat of CITES is administered by the UNEP, as stipulated in a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Executive Director of UNEP and the CITES Standing Committee.⁹ CITES aims to ensure that wildlife is not exploited by international trade and ecological balance is maintained. The scope of CITES covers over 35,000 specimens under varying grades of protection.¹⁰ Although the scope of CITES is regularly broadened to include new species, millions of unlisted specimens remain vulnerable to illegal harvesting and trade.¹¹

⁷ Yuriy Fedotov, Executive Director of The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Remarks at the launch of the first World Wildlife Crime Report, 2016* Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/speeches/2016/ccpcj-wildlife-240516.html>

⁸ United Nations General Assembly (28 October 1982). "World Charter for Nature". United Nations. Retrieved 25 August 2013.

⁹ United Nations Environmental Programme, Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna, *Memorandum of Understanding*.

¹⁰ United Nations Environmental Programme, *Checklist of CITES Species*, Available at: [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8973/-Checklist%20of%20CITES%20Species%20-%20Lista%20de%20la%20Especies%20CITES%20-%20Liste%20de%20Especies%20CITES%20\(English-Spanish-French\)-2001478.pdf?sequence=3&%3BisAllowed=](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8973/-Checklist%20of%20CITES%20Species%20-%20Lista%20de%20la%20Especies%20CITES%20-%20Liste%20de%20Especies%20CITES%20(English-Spanish-French)-2001478.pdf?sequence=3&%3BisAllowed=)

¹¹ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.

8. On 20 December 2013, to mark CITES' date of adoption, the 68th session of the UNGA proclaimed the 3rd of March World Wildlife Day.¹² World Wildlife Day marks the celebration of flora and fauna and strives to raise awareness about the exploitation of wildlife and the threats of illegal wildlife trade markets. This UNGA resolution empowered CITES to facilitate World Wildlife Day in cooperation with suitable UN agencies. In 2019, in alignment with Goal 14 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, World Wildlife Day was dedicated to marine flora and fauna. Thus, March 3rd has become the most significant event of the year dedicated to raising awareness about crimes committed against wildlife.¹³
9. In July 2015, the UNGA adopted a resolution entitled "Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife." This resolution establishes a powerful framework for collective action. The UNGA reaffirmed the World Charter for Nature's observations and developed a more sophisticated approach to address illegal trade in wildlife. This resolution highlighted the importance of international solutions and encouraged Member States to ratify CITES and implement its restrictions on wildlife trade. Furthermore, the resolution called upon UNODC to continue its reporting of illicit trafficking trends.¹⁴
10. In 2009, UNODC and four other international organizations decided to form the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC).¹⁵ The ICCWC was officially launched in 2010. This consortium of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Bank, the World Customs Organization, CITES and UNODC set out the goal of creating a global strategy to tackle illegal wildlife trade. Subsequently, in cooperation with the ICCWC, UNODC developed a Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit.¹⁶ The toolkit provides support for addressing wildlife crime, specifically by identifying patterns, analyzing criminal justice response, understanding different links and actors in the wildlife and forest offences chain, and preventing crimes by providing alternative incentives.¹⁷ Although UNODC conducts its national analysis by applying the toolkit, the responsibility to implement required measures ultimately falls on Member States.
11. Furthermore, UNODC launched a four-year program entitled the "Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime."¹⁸ This program sets out the objective of improving local and global legal frameworks to ensure that wildlife is protected from illegal trafficking. Program activities range from data collection to technical assistance measures that build Member States' capacity in combatting wildlife crime. Furthermore, the four-year program aims to strengthen local and international cooperation and combat organized crime. Through the Wildlife and

¹² Resolution 205 (2013)

¹³ <https://www.wildlifeday.org>

¹⁴ Resolution 314 (2015)

¹⁵ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *International Consortium on Combating Wildlife and Crime*, Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/iccwc.html>

¹⁶ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

¹⁷ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

¹⁸ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime* Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/global-programme.html>

Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit, the UNODC urges Member States to reassess their role in addressing wildlife crime.

12. In 2016, as a part of its Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, UNODC has launched the first-ever World Wildlife Crime report. This report assessed the growing market of illicit wildlife trade. Using the World Wildlife Seizure (WISE) database, the report highlighted 164,000 seizures in 120 countries that affected 7,000 different species.¹⁹ The Wildlife Crime Report further assessed several case studies spanning seven different trade sectors, demonstrating how each affects the global population of certain specified species. The report concluded by outlining policy implications and recommendations to help Member States combat illegal wildlife trafficking.²⁰
13. In 2017, the UNODC published a research brief to update the Wildlife Crime Report. This policy brief highlighted changes in illicit wildlife trafficking trends and emphasized the positive outcomes of tightened national and international regulations.²¹
14. In 2015, the UN adopted 17 inter-connected Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs emphasize environmental preservation, natural capital, and wildlife protection. Specifically, the UN Development Programme provides support for Member States by encouraging them to share the advantages of sustainable wildlife management with local populations. Member States are further encouraged to reinforce protection of threatened flora and fauna. Thus, the UNDP aims to create a dialogue between Member States, international organizations and agencies in this issue domain.
15. The UNDP - Global Environmental Finance Unit's (GEF) biodiversity and ecosystems portfolio is the largest in the UN system. This unit provides funding for more than 130 Member States, spanning a total of USD 5 billion. Moreover, the GEF provides funding for 13 Member States through the Global Wildlife Program, a partnership created by the World Bank to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products and promote conservation.²² The UNDP-GEF Unit directly provides services to Member States. Such services include support for the sustainable management of ecosystems, wildlife products, water resources, waste disposal and climate adaptation.
16. In September 2017, the UNGA adopted a resolution to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. The resolution expressed increasing concern about the growth of illegal wildlife trade and recognizes the ICCWC's exemplary work. The resolution also urged Member States to adopt CITES trade regulations. The resolution further

¹⁹ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *World Wildlife Seizures Database* https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/WLC16_Chapter_2.pdf

²⁰ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime* Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/global-programme.html>

²¹ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife Crime Status Update 2017*

²² United Nations Development Program, *Tackling Wildlife Crime* Available at: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/planet/environment-and-natural-capital/tackling-wildlife-crime.html>

recognized illicit wildlife trade as an international organized crime and highlighted the importance of stronger anti-corruption law enforcement. Member States were encouraged to use the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit and improve the safety of wildlife in their national jurisdictions.²³

Challenges

17. Wildlife crime is a complex, multi-dimensional problem that results from a range of cultural, economic and political causes. Tackling illicit wildlife trade is an especially difficult task because it requires strong cooperation between Member States and a multitude of determined actors, many of which include citizens and statesmen who financially benefit from wildlife crime. A coordinated multi-sectoral response is required from international and national actors.²⁴ Although the UN, CITES and many other international arrangements and organizations have pledged to battle wildlife trade, it will remain a transnational problem without the full dedication of Member States and drive many species to extinction in the near future.
18. Illicit wildlife trafficking is fueled by industrial sectors such as furniture, medicine, food and fashion. Each sector is deeply integrated into everyday life. Therefore, one of the challenges of addressing wildlife crime is that although it has roots in illicit markets, many illegally harvested products can also be found in legitimate markets.
19. Illicit wildlife trade is fueled by international organized criminal syndicates. Although there is no internationally accepted definition of an organized criminal group, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has defined organized criminal groups as “a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, financial or other material benefit.”²⁵ The UN recognized illicit wildlife trade as a form of transnational organized crime in a Resolution adopted on 21 November 2016. This resolution called for further cooperation with INTERPOL to tackle environmental crimes.
20. Organized criminal groups have changed the nature of illicit wildlife trade, making it an international market fueled by profit rather than poverty. Criminal organizations are attracted by the lucrative potential of wildlife trade markets and the low risk of detention under inconsistent punishment systems. A study conducted by UNEP and INTERPOL shows that wildlife crime is the fourth largest crime sector with a growth rate two to three times faster than that of the global economy.²⁶ Criminal organizations are exploiting the poverty and vulnerability of

²³ Resolution 326 (2017)

²⁴ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

²⁵ UNODC – UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME. *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and The Protocols Thereto*. 2004.

²⁶ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

the poorest countries, who are often unable to effectively defend their natural resources due to financial constraints and regulatory challenges. The proceeds of wildlife offences often go untracked. In fact, profits from wildlife trade are even used to finance criminal or armed militia operations domestically and internationally.

21. The involvement of organized criminal groups in illicit wildlife trafficking influences the domestic politics of Member States in which such crimes take place. Organized crime exploits poverty and gains considerable influence over policy processes through corruption. Corruption erodes the government's domestic regulatory control, making the exploitation of natural resources easier. In light of a governmental power vacuum, organized crime groups take unofficial control over specific territories, government policies and judiciary systems. The influence of criminal groups compromises law enforcement and the rule of law. This also means that criminals and government officials involved in illicit wildlife trafficking are rarely prosecuted, further undermining public trust in the legitimacy of the government.²⁷ Therefore, corruption leads to a loss of faith in the state, which directly contributes to an increase in criminal activities. In extreme situations, the loss of governmental legitimacy can even drive certain communities to seek economic and physical security from non-state armed groups and terrorists.²⁸
22. Despite the emerging trend of criminal organization-based illicit wildlife trade, wildlife crime traditionally originates from poverty and a lack of proper education in source countries.²⁹ In the past, local communities resorted to poaching without awareness of its ecological and environmental consequences. Although poverty remains an important driver of wildlife crime, the scale of such exploitation is exacerbated by the involvement of organized crime groups. Organized crime groups take advantage of poor regulatory environments in source countries and the dependence of local communities on wildlife trade. Furthermore, poaching further deepens poverty by inflicting environmental damage amounting to as high as USD 70 billion a year in developing countries.³⁰ The costly ecological consequences of illicit wildlife trade make wildlife crime even more detrimental to communities traditionally dependent on such resources, given that the collapse of ecosystems threatens human livelihoods and communities in affected regions.
23. The lack of distinction between illegal and legal markets contributes to the challenges of tackling wildlife trade. To provide an example of a legal market, antique ivory can be traded in most countries if such ivory was harvested before any relevant international agreements were adopted. Despite the presence of small

²⁷ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

²⁸ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

²⁹

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/447361468325276787/pdf/843960REVISED0000Enforcing0Env0Laws.pdf>

³⁰

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/447361468325276787/pdf/843960REVISED0000Enforcing0Env0Laws.pdf>

legal markets for wildlife trade, it is difficult to estimate whether the legal demand and legal supply of wildlife products are reconciled. In recent years, an unaccounted growth of ivory poaching and trafficking has developed outside of charted ivory retail markets.³¹ Subsequently, illegally harvested wildlife products can be laundered into the legal market through uncontrolled wildlife sourcing and the use of fraudulent paperwork. Through false declarations of captive breeding and purchased documentation from corrupt officials, criminals leap into the legal market from illicit activities. This process is almost impossible for authorities to detect. In source countries, fraudulent zoos also serve to mask the commercial importation of animals to high-demand destinations.³²

24. Another challenge of addressing illicit wildlife trade is the lack of overarching international regulations. Although CITES extends protection to more than 35,000 species, species not included in CITES' list can still be vulnerable to exploitation. For instance, seizures of rosewood species make up around 35% of illegally trafficked wildlife product seizures. Rosewood refers to tropical hardwoods of dark or brownish veining. Yet, only a small number of rosewood species are protected under CITES.³³ Smugglers of rosewood avoid legal repercussions by extracting species not protected by any of CITES' three Appendixes, such as the Siamese rosewood.³⁴ Although certain Member States have instituted national-level bans on rosewood to prevent further extraction, international solutions remain absent without the regulation of CITES.
25. Another serious challenge in addressing illicit wildlife trade is the lack of accurate data. Undocumented illicit activities make an accurate analysis of scale almost impossible. It is estimated that wildlife crime produces a profit between USD 10 to 23 billion. However, the scale of this industry is hard to measure due to the gap between the price of freshly harnessed animals and the final processed wildlife product. This gap distorts measurements of illegal wildlife trade and provides inaccurate data. Wildlife is often processed before shipment, and the flora and fauna involved in this production process are unclear and undocumented. Furthermore, the World WISE database remains limited in its geographic and temporal coverage. According to the database, there were 164 000 seizures between 2005 and 2014.³⁵ However, it is important to note that this data "on their own, they cannot be used to demonstrate the magnitude of the trafficking or shed much light on law enforcement capacity."³⁶ The database is further unable to shed light on the illegal trade of wildlife domestically. It can only provide evidence for the assumed size of illegal trade chains run by organized crime groups.
26. The market size of illicit wildlife trade also derives from high demand in areas where cultural norms inform the value of wildlife products. Animals such as the pangolin are traded illegally because their scales are used in traditional medicine

³¹ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³² UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³³ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³⁴ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³⁵ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³⁶ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

and their meat is consumed as a delicacy.³⁷ Due to cultural underpinnings, a legal market is reserved for pangolins. However, a rise in the illegal trade of pangolins is also observed due to increasing demand. The scale of illegal pangolin trade has increased in several Asian countries, especially in China and Viet Nam, where there are documented markets for pangolin as medicine and food. Despite international regulations, the pangolin trade continues to thrive based on cultural beliefs.

27. Due to its complexity, illegal wildlife trade is especially difficult to address and requires coordinated international solutions. The unsustainable industrial exploitation of wildlife threatens ecosystems around the world and negatively affects human livelihood. Improved global networks of transportation and economic growth have caused an unprecedented increase in illicit wildlife trade. Due to the absence of overarching international regulations and blurred boundaries between legal and illegal markets, organized crime groups flourish by committing environmental crimes. Therefore, when Member States consider international solutions to wildlife trade, factors such as poverty, culture, and lack of awareness must also be taken into account.

III. Future Priorities

28. The scale of wildlife crime has increased exponentially over the past several decades. Until recently, the international community was not prepared to address this issue. However, in light of substantive efforts by UNODC, UNDP, and CITES, public awareness among Member States has increased over the past few years. To significantly curb wildlife crime, further actions are required at the international and the national level. Cooperation between Member States and international organizations is crucial in tackling this issue.
29. In the fight against illegal wildlife trafficking, cooperation between all actors is critical, ranging from producers to consumers.³⁸ Illicit wildlife trade must be tackled by reducing poaching, which will cut off wildlife product supply chains. In addition to reducing trafficking, Member States should also strive to reduce demand and decrease the profitability of wildlife crime. Specifically, Member States should strive to address organized crime groups, apply UN guidelines, and observe international standards and regulations.
30. Raising awareness is key to tackling the issue of under-education. The general public and the judiciary system need to understand illegal wildlife harvesting and trade. By educating local communities and wildlife workers, Member States can deter them from unwillingly or unknowingly helping criminal organizations. Through targeted campaigns and regional initiatives, Member States can change public behavior and perceptions concerning poaching. Awareness campaigns should emphasize the negative impacts of wildlife trade on local ecosystems, and governments should implement regular updates and reviews. Furthermore,

³⁷ UNODC, *World Wildlife Crime Report*. Vienna: UNODC, 2016.- UNODC Wildlife Crime report

³⁸ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

awareness-raising can dissuade consumer demand for illegal wildlife products and decrease the market for wildlife trade.³⁹ Public awareness can also inspire local action against wildlife criminals and provide transparency for law enforcement.

31. In many countries, laws and regulations concerning wildlife protection and the judiciary system need to be reformed. However, as the Analytic Toolkit notes, “one of the many challenges in developing and enhancing these systems is the fact that wildlife and forest offences relate to a diverse range of government sectors that are governed by a great variety of legislative instruments.”⁴⁰ Therefore, to enact successful reforms, Member States must review respective national legislations concerning hunting, logging and the trade of live species. Member States should assess the effectiveness of existing regimes and further examine whether such measures are in line with international regulations.
32. Furthermore, Member States should consider creating stricter sentences to deter participation in organized crime groups and wildlife crime. After Kenya amended its laws concerning illicit wildlife trade and strengthened domestic law enforcement, poaching significantly decreased in the country.⁴¹ Following Kenya’s example, many countries in East Africa and Asia have applied tougher penalties by introducing longer prison time and higher fines.⁴² Member States should amend their legislation to ensure that the illegal trade of endangered species is deemed a “serious crime” according to the definition of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Such measures will change perceptions of wildlife trade as a low-risk and lucrative source of income.⁴³
33. To ensure that a country’s judiciary system is not regionally isolated in its efforts to fight the transnational challenge of wildlife crime, Member States should consider creating regional law enforcement networks. Regional and independent organizations can help fight corruption, enhance inter-governmental cooperation and monitor transnational trade routes that are used to smuggle illegal wildlife products. An example of such regional arrangements is the Lusaka Agreement Task Force, which facilitates cooperative investigations of violations among its parties.⁴⁴

³⁹ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

⁴⁰ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁴¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Program, *Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Case of Kenya*

Available at:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26893Kasiki_Wildlife_poaching_and_trafficking_.pdf

⁴² United Nations, Department of Economy and Social Affairs, Strengthening laws to tackle wildlife crime.

Available at:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/forest/strengthening-laws-to-tackle-wildlife-crime.html>

⁴³ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁴⁴ United Nations Sustainable Development Program, *Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Case of Kenya*,

Available at:

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26893Kasiki_Wildlife_poaching_and_trafficking_.pdf

34. Moreover, Member States should adopt the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit, which provides “comprehensive guidance in analyzing administrative, preventive and criminal justice responses to wildlife and forest crime and other related offences in a given country.”⁴⁵ The Toolkit also aims to recognize the actors involved in illicit wildlife trade, diagnose the driving causes of their actions, and facilitate the distribution of information between domestic decision-makers.⁴⁶ However, the toolkit cannot substitute practical experience and policy expertise. It does not purport to set out legal and policy propositions. Rather, the toolkit can assist Member States in their assessment of opportunities to tackle illegal wildlife trade.⁴⁷
35. Beyond the national level, an international response is also required to tackle transnational illegal trafficking of wildlife. Due to the involvement of organized crime organizations, inter-governmental organizations such as the UN and INTERPOL have a central role in the fight against wildlife crime.
36. As aforementioned, existing international regulations on illicit wildlife trade are limited in their protection of a select group of species. Although the achievements of CITES are undeniable as one of the greatest international commitments to defending wildlife, CITES must also adapt to an increasing scale of wildlife crime. As specified in its three Appendices, CITES’ list of protected species should be increased.⁴⁸
37. Due to the limitations of CITES, it is currently possible to sell illegally harvested goods legally in another state. Therefore, Member States should collaboratively draft legislation that recognizes the illegal status of wildlife products if they have been unlawfully harvested and traded, even if the product is lawfully sold in the destination state.⁴⁹
38. Many Member States are behind in the process of successfully implementing CITES regulations. However, CITES is of central importance as organ providing the only international and legally binding definition of wildlife trade.⁵⁰ Member States are urged to adopt CITES and support Member States that are unable to proceed with this adaptation. Under the guidance of CITES, the international community should participate in coordinated operations against poachers who traffic wildlife products across borders.
39. Thus far, many Member States have failed to adopt CITES regulations successfully. Due to a lack of professional overview and expertise, national governments struggle to successfully implement CITES guidelines. Therefore, the

⁴⁵ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁴⁶ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁴⁷ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁴⁸ United Nations Environment Program, International Criminal Police Organization, *The Rise of Environmental Crime*

⁴⁹ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*

⁵⁰ United Nations, Department of Economy and Social Affairs, Strengthening laws to tackle wildlife crime.

Available at:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/forest/strengthening-laws-to-tackle-wildlife-crime.html>

UN should provide support for the capacity of Member States to involve scientific experts in policy processes. The participation of scientific authorities and conservation scientists will also improve the quality of information gathered about illicit wildlife trade and further inform evidence-based policy-making.

40. Recent technological advancements have made it feasible to detect illegally harvested goods and trace them back to the criminal groups involved in illicit trade. The latest technologies to tackle illegal wildlife trade can be further improved by better data compilation, storage and sharing of secure information. Furthermore, available, secure and reviewed databases should be incorporated into such technologies. Member States should strive to create a secure database in cooperation with INTERPOL and CITES, in order to access and distribute complex data concerning illicit wildlife trade. Furthermore, the UN should encourage and support the use of technologies such as smart shipping containers, optical recognition approaches and environmental isotope analysis.
41. After the wildlife product or live animal has left the source country, consumption can be discouraged through educational awareness programmes. However, in most cases, the animal is killed in the harvesting process. By following UN guidelines such as the UNODC's Analytic Toolkit or UNGA resolutions, Member States can effectively decrease illegal wildlife trade. Cooperation and dedication are especially required to address international criminal organizations. In sum, it is the responsibility of every Member State to battle illegal wildlife trafficking and save the global ecosystem.

IV. Further Reading

World Charter Nature

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/tools/keywords/united-nations-world-charter-nature>

An informative discussion paper about Illicit wildlife trade

http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7466/-UNEP_Perspective_Series_-_Illicit_Wildlife_Trafficking_An_Environmental%2c_Economic_and_Social_Issue-2014ENVIRONMENT_PAPERS_DISCUSSION_14.pdf.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

Resolution 326:

<https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/326>

United Nations Sustainable Development Program, *Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking Case of Kenya*

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26893Kasiki_Wildlife_poaching_and_trafficking_.pdf

CITES website:

<https://cites.org/eng/res/index.php>

Royal Society research on usable technologies against wildlife

<http://www.royalsociety.org/illegal-wildlife-trade>

WWF description of Illegal Wildlife trade:

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-wildlife-trade>

WWF article on CITES conference

<http://wwf.panda.org/?278415/CITES-has-its-critics-but-record-breaking-conference-is-critical-for-worlds-wildlife>

How CITES works

<https://conservationaction.co.za/resources/reports/cites-alone-cannot-combat-illegal-wildlife-trade/>

CITES species database:

[https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8973/-Checklist%20of%20CITES%20Species%20-%20Lista%20de%20la%20Especies%20CITES%20-%20Liste%20des%20Especies%20CITES%20\(English-Spanish-French\)-2001478.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=1](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8973/-Checklist%20of%20CITES%20Species%20-%20Lista%20de%20la%20Especies%20CITES%20-%20Liste%20des%20Especies%20CITES%20(English-Spanish-French)-2001478.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=1)

Conservation community-good data source:

<https://www.wildlabs.net/about>

World Seizure database:

https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/WLC16_Chapter_2.pdf

UN news piece on fight against wildlife crime:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/forest/strengthening-laws-to-tackle-wildlife-crime.html>