

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Combatting the illicit trade of animals and animal products





Forum Economic and Social Council

Issue: Combating the illicit trade of animals and animal products

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Introduction

The rate at which wild animals are disappearing from the planet is alarming to say the least. Over the past 40 years alone, 52% of the world's wildlife has been wiped out of existence.¹ The illicit trade of animals and animal products is the fourth largest illegal global trade, making up a large part of many countries economies. Illicit trade of animals is pushing many species towards the brink of extinction as well as robbing countries of their natural heritage.

Some examples of illegal wildlife trade are well known, such as poaching of elephants for ivory and tigers for their skins and bones. However, countless other species are similarly overexploited, from marine turtles to timber trees. Not all wildlife trade is illegal. Wild plants and animals from tens of thousands of species are caught or harvested from the wild and then sold legitimately as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist ornaments and medicine. Wildlife trade escalates into a crisis when an increasing proportion is illegal and unsustainable - directly threatening the survival of many species in the wild. The overexploitation of these resources as it is unsustainable, and will eventually in the future, be the cause of a less diverse and rich environment.

Definition of Key Terms

Animal products

Any material derived from the body of an animal. Some examples are: fat, flesh, skin, blood, etc.

Wildlife crime

More commonly known as the illegal wildlife trade; the trafficking of wildlife. This is most commonly controlled by dangerous crime syndicates.

Wildlife criminal

One who is involved in the trafficking of wildlife.

Unsustainable

Not able to be maintained at the current rate or level. In this case the increasing demand for rare illegal animal trade products is not able to be maintained at the current rate

¹ One Green Planet



or level. In the most extreme case, unsustainability leads to the extinction of the animal or animal product.

Extinct

No longer in existence

Flora and fauna

Animals and plants

General Overview

We as humans are the single most influential species in our ability to alter our natural environment. Between pollution, deforestation and illegal wildlife trade we have managed to accelerate the standard rate of species extinction to be around 1000 times faster than normal.² Animals and animal products are traded in exchange for money or other useful objects. The trade is driven by the consumer who desires wildlife products. Wildlife products are estimated to be worth approximately \$160 billion. In addition to this, there is a large and profitable illegal wildlife trade, but since it is conducted covertly no one can judge with any accuracy how much these products may be worth.

Due to the illegal nature of the trade, it means that it is conducted underground or on black markets. The sellers are large dangerous crime syndicates who find this an easy manner in which to earn money. The demand for rare, protected species is what drives the illegal wildlife trade. Due to the large quantities demanded of these rare and protected species, it becomes an easier alternative to make money for large-scale crime syndicates who hold international connections within the illegal services or black market industries. These products and animals need to be smuggled in order to avoid paying duties. Due to the cost saving mind set of the criminal enterprises that run these forms of trade the conditions during transport for these live animals are bound to be bad.

Wildlife crime often makes up a large portion of a countries GDP (especially developing nations) meaning that if it were to stop these countries would be heavily affected by the losses of GDP. However the illicit trade of animals and animal products is actually not good for the supplying country. The presence of this form of illegal trade undermines countries' efforts to protect their natural resources. These natural resources end up being overexploited, which leads to the extinction of the animal and naturally, the animal product it produces.

Overexploitation of resources

The most obvious problem that can be associated with wildlife trade is the overexploitation of resources. This in turn harms human livelihood and the balance of nature. Wildlife is essential to the lives of a large proportion of the world's population, most commonly the poorest living in developing countries, those who are poverty stricken. Rural households rely on wild animals for their meat protein, trees for fuel and clean oxygen and both wild wild animals and plants provide components of traditional medicines used daily. Many developed countries are cushioned from any effects caused by a reduced supply of a particular household item, but many in the developing world are dependent on the continued availability of local wildlife resources.

² One Green Planet



Human life depends on the existence of a functioning planet Earth. The threat of overexploitation of resources affects the balance of nature within the environment. Overfishing is an example of the overexploitation of natural resources. It does not only affect individual fishing communities and threaten certain fish species, but causes an imbalance in the entire marine system.

Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

The CITES, also known as the Washington Convention is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered animals and plants. All member states of the United Nations are party to the treaty, with the exception of Andorra, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Federated States of Micronesia, Haiti, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, and Tuvalu. UN observer the Holy See is also not a member. Roughly 5,000 species of animals and 29,000 species of plants are protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade.³

CITES: How it works

CITES is one of the largest and oldest conservation and sustainable use agreements in existence. Participation is voluntary, and countries that have agreed to be bound by the Convention are known as Parties. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties, it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework respected by each Party, which must adopt their own domestic legislation to implement CITES at the national level. Often, domestic legislation is either non-existent (especially in Parties that have not ratified it), or with penalties with the gravity of the crime and insufficient deterrents to wildlife traders.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit — officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Goal 15 focuses on sustainably managing forests, combatting desertification, halting and reverse land degradation, halting biodiversity loss. One of the main targets of this goal is to: take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products. In order to raise awareness for the pressing issue the UN launched the #WildForLife campaign.

#WildForLife

With the help of A-list celebrities the UN launched an unprecedented campaign against the illicit trade of animals. “It saddens me that in the 21st century, with all our knowledge and power, we are still hearing stories of wildlife facing the possibility of extinction at the hands of man,” said Gisele Bündchen. “It is clear to me that a radical global shift needs to occur and it will take everyone accepting the challenge to support the UNEP Wild for Life campaign. “Knowledge is power and now is the time to set our minds to ending all illegal

³ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (2013)



wildlife trade before the choice is no longer in our hands. Today, I am giving my name to change the game for sea turtles.” The #WildForLife campaign seeks to mobilise millions to end illegal wildlife trade. Through utilising social media as a communicative platform and encouraging the use of the hashtag #WildForLife, the UN hopes for the campaign to be more effective in this technological age. “Each year, thousands of wild animals are illegally killed, often by organised criminal networks motivated by profit and greed,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. “I call on all Governments and people everywhere to support the new United Nations campaign, Wild for Life, which aims to mobilise the world to end this destructive trade. Preserving wildlife is crucial for the wellbeing of people and planet alike.”

International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC)

ICWC is the collaborative effort of five inter-governmental organizations working to bring coordinated support to the national wildlife law enforcement agencies and to the sub-regional and regional networks that, on a daily basis, act in defense of natural resources. The ICWC partners are the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and the World Customs Organization.

Wildlife Conservation Service (WCS)

The WCS is an organisation who takes as its goal the conservation of the world's largest wild places in 15 priority regions that hold more than 50% of the world's biodiversity. In addition to conserving these remaining ecologically intact areas, the strategy seeks to reverse the decline of six priority species groups across their range. It further calls for maintaining viable populations of critically endangered species in WCS's five wildlife parks in New York City, including the Bronx Zoo and New York Aquarium.

The priority regions include:

- **Arctic Beringia** (Arctic coasts and seas of Alaska, Western Canada, and Russia)
- **Spine of the North American Continent** (North American coniferous forests)
- **Eastern North American Forests** (Adirondacks, Northern Ontario, and boreal forests)
- **New York Seascape** (Coasts and seas of the mid-Atlantic)
- **Mesoamerica & Western Caribbean** (Forests, coasts, and coral reefs in Belize, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua)
- **Andes, Amazon & Orinoco** (Forests, grasslands, and wetlands of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela)
- **Patagonia** (Coasts of Argentina and Chile)
- **Central Africa & Gulf of Guinea** (Forests and coast, including Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda)
- **East African Forests & Savannahs** (Savannah, woodland, and forest including Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia)
- **Madagascar & Western Indian Ocean** (Coral reefs, and island forests of Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania)
- **Temperate Asian Mountains & Grasslands** (Grasslands, forests, and mountains of central and northeast Asia)
- **South Asia and Bay of Bengal** (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal)
- **Lower Mekong** (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam)
- **Southeast Asian Archipelago** (Forests, coasts, and reefs of Indonesia and Malaysia)
- **Melanesia** ("Ridge to reef" in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands)



The priority species groups include: apes; sharks & rays; big cats; whales & dolphins; elephants; and tortoises & freshwater turtles.⁴

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)

an international non-governmental organisation working in the field of the wilderness preservation as well as reducing humanity's footprint on the environment. Stamping out wildlife crime is a priority for the WWF because it is the largest threat to the futures of endangered animals.

United Nations (UN)

The UN is very much involved with the continuously developing issue of illicit trade of animals and animal products. With the help of A-list celebrities the UN launched an unprecedented campaign against the illicit trade of animals.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The IUCN is an international organisation working in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is involved in data gathering and analysis, research, field projects, advocacy, lobbying and education. IUCN's mission is to "influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable."⁵ The IUCN drafted the CITES as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP's collaborative action to strengthening the response to the illegal trade in wildlife spans a diverse project portfolio at national, regional and global scales, building on existing and ongoing interventions and initiatives at national and international scales. UNEP plays a major role in the UN's recent #WildForLife campaign.

TRAFFIC

TRAFFIC seeks and activates solutions to the problems created by illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade. Our aim is to encourage sustainability by providing decision-makers, traders and others involved in wildlife trade reliable information about the environmental harm irresponsible trade can cause, and present guidance on how to counteract it.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

UNODC is the lead department, of the UN, working on the issues related to wildlife and forest crimes.

China

⁴ WCS

⁵ IUCN



China is one of the largest destinations for animal products, especially tiger bones from Siberia and Southeast Asia, due to the importance of animal parts in traditional Chinese medicine. China's National Inter-agency CITES Enforcement Coordination Group (NICE-CG) has been attempting to crack down on this smuggling, especially in Guangxi Province on her southern border. In October and November of 2012, the agency performed a smuggling interception operation, which, in those two months alone, seized 17,300 live animals and 2,242 pieces of ivory and bone.⁶

India

India is a large and diverse nation in regards to its plant and animal life, and so is both a producer and consumer of illegal wildlife products. Animal trafficking in India is primarily internal, making it more difficult for individual smugglers to be caught crossing borders. Although India has strict laws governing the protection of its native fauna, inefficient governance and a lack of political willpower has undermined enforcement of these regulations. There is also a significant export of Indian goods, primarily through Southeast Asia to China. Due to the direct land border, these routes are relatively safer than importing illegal goods into Chinese ports. Of primary interest are ingredients in traditional medicine, such as tiger whiskers or bear bile, and luxury items such as furs or exotic pets.⁷

Nigeria

Nigeria is a country with great biodiversity due to its position straddling the jungles of the West African coast and the Saharan desert. The country was once a hub of illegal wildlife trafficking due to government corruption and was suspended from CITES in 2005 due to its failure to meet the organization's requirements.⁸ However, Nigeria went to great lengths to reform various aspects of its government, especially wildlife protection, since the suspension, and has since been readmitted. Trafficking in Nigeria, though greatly decreased since 2005, is still an issue. Rhino poaching, in particular, is extremely profitable, a single horn, (weighing on average 4 kg) selling for up to \$50,000 USD. Recently, a shipment of Nigerian ivory worth \$5.3 million was seized in Hong Kong, China, suggesting the continuing existence of organized poaching in Nigeria.⁹

South Africa

South Africa is a major source of wildlife products for export, especially rhinoceros horns and ivory. Trafficking brings in approximately \$20 billion annually 16.3% of the country's annual GDP.¹⁰

Although the government officially condemns illegal hunting, there are allegations of corruption of officials in the lower parts of the bureaucracy. After being harvested, goods are transported to the coastal region, and from there are primarily sent across the Indian Ocean to South-East Asia, where they are used as decoration or as ingredients in traditional medicine. The South African government has passed sweeping legislation in an attempt to limit this trade, most prominently the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act

⁶ TRAFFIC

⁷ WWF

⁸ CITES

⁹ WWF

¹⁰ South Africa: Wikipedia



(NEMBA), which severely punishes those who attempt to export the products of endangered animals. It is unclear how effective this legislation has been.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
July 1975	The CITES was created/put into force
1976	TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade monitoring network, was established
November 2009	The ICCWC was formed
December 2013	General Assembly resolution 68/205 proclaimed 3 March as World Wildlife Day
June 2014	UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) held its first session
May 2016	UN launched #WildForLife campaign

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

1. #WildForLife campaign, 2016
Name of the Resolution, Date of the Resolution (Resolution Number)
2. General Assembly resolution [69/314](#), Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, adopted 30 July 2015
3. General Assembly resolution [68/205](#), proclaiming 3 March as World Wildlife Day, adopted 20 December 2013
4. UN Development Programme (UNDP): Combating Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking
5. UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): Wildlife and Forest Crime
6. UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA): Illegal Trade in Wildlife
 - UNEA held its first session from 23 to 27 June 2014 ([A/69/25](#))
 - 26 June 2014: Ministerial dialogue on Illegal Trade in Wildlife
7. International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

In this section you need to evaluate previous attempts to resolve the issue. Explain what has been done so far, why some attempts worked and why others failed.

The Convention in International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered animals and plants. The creation of this treaty was one of the first steps taken to protect endangered animals and plants. With all member states of the UN being a party to the treaty, with the exception of Andorra, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Federated States of Micronesia, Haiti, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkmenistan, and Tuvalu and roughly 5,000 species of animals and 29,000 species of plants protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade this solution to the issue could be seen as a successful one so far.

On May 25th 2016, the UN launched an online campaign to help raise awareness against the illicit trade of wildlife. The campaign #WildForLife features A-List celebrities.



Through utilising social media as a communicative platform and encouraging the use of the hashtag #WildForLife, the UN hopes for the campaign to be more effective in this technological age. Since this campaign is recently new, it is hard to evaluate whether it has been a success or not.

Possible Solutions

Delegates must be aware that the presence of this form of illegal trade undermines countries' efforts to protect their natural resources. Meaning that in order for wildlife trading to be eradicated/decrease countries could do more in order to protect their natural resources.

The wildlife trade is mostly done through illegal smuggling by dangerous crime syndicates. In order to tackle this angle of the issue it could be suggested to increase border patrols in the appropriate areas to target the illegal smuggling.

Delegates must be weary of the fact that many factors play a role and could be linked to the threat of extinction of certain species. An example being the consequences of habitat loss due to human interruption of the natural habitat means that the animals present in that area become worse off than before. Attempts to remove the pressures caused by human interaction with nature in areas where animals reside present on the list of potential extinction could go a long way in aiding that species from the threat of going extinct.

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