

Environmental Committee

Topic #1: Illegal poaching and wildlife trade

Background:

The world has been dealing with the issue of illegal poaching and wildlife trade for decades. Being aware of the fact that this is a global issue, illegal poaching and wildlife trade (which are closely connected) should be a subject of debates on every continent, in every country.

To begin with the term illegal poaching, it is believed to be illegal capturing of wild animals within a certain territory usually protected by any kind of law or simply – illegal hunting. In fact, poaching is not related just with wildlife animals but also with plants. However, not every kind of poaching is considered as a crime. The term wildlife trade describes trade where is any sale or exchange of wild animals and plants. The problem occurs when the certain specimen is on the brink of extinction or somehow threaten. In that case, wildlife trade becomes illegal. It is often said that illegal wildlife trade is the third most valuable illicit commerce behind drugs and arms.

According to the growth of population, there has been a rising demand for all kinds of wildlife goods, for instance leather, ivory, seafood, timbers, textiles etc. Illegal poaching and wildlife trade therefore became a highly profitable business, which is driven by high margins and in many cases enormous prices are being paid for the rare species. For example, rhino horn, elephant ivory and tiger products continue to command high prices among consumers, especially in Asia. In Vietnam, the recent myth that rhino horn can cure cancer has led to massive poaching in South Africa and pushed the price of rhino horn to rival gold.

Illegal wildlife trade is run by criminal networks with wide, international reach. Some traffic illegal drugs, arms and even people. Recent evidence shows that some networks are also linked to terrorist organizations. The animals are usually harmed during their transportation and they are being kept in terrible conditions under the eye of remorseless people.

There are certain places where wildlife trade is particularly threatening called "wildlife trade hotspots". They include China's international borders, trade hubs in East/Southern Africa and South-east Asia, the eastern borders of the European Union, some markets in Mexico, parts of the Caribbean, parts of Indonesia and New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands.

There is no doubt that illegal poaching is considered as environmental crime as well as illegal wildlife trade, which further lead to extinction of species and unstable biodiversity. Moreover, poaching is connected with the spread of zoonic diseases such as ebola or HIV.

International trade in species of conservation concern is monitored by CITES, the most important international treaty signed in 1973 in Washington. This treaty protects wildlife against over-exploitation and ensures that trade does not threaten the survival of species and plants. Due to that, legislation is a vital way to control wildlife trade, but to be successful, laws need to be widely understood, accepted and practical to apply. Therefore there is an urge for this

committee to find some helpful solutions and to agree on main changing points towards fighting illegal poaching and wildlife trade.

UN Involvement:

The issue of illegal poaching and wildlife trade is being discussed within the agenda of **UNEP** (United Nations Environmental Programme) which declared in May 2016 that wildlife trade has become a global crisis. The **UN Office on Drugs and Crime** (UNODC) is the lead department working on issues related to wildlife and forest crime. In 2010, UNODC and 4 other international bodies formed an **International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime** to bring together the expertise of each agency to support countries combating these crimes. The other organizations are: CITES, INTERPOL, WCO, UNDP and WWF.

WWF is the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organization. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. This organisation closely co-operates with UN.

The most important publications adopted by General assembly are:

- General Assembly resolution 69/314, **Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife**, adopted 30 July 2015
- General Assembly resolution 68/205, proclaiming 3 March as **World Wildlife Day**, adopted 20 December 2013

->here is your INSPIRATION

Questions to consider:

Why is it important to protect species on the edge of extinction?

Does your country have a problem with illegal poaching and wildlife trade?

Which violations and offences connected to poaching are considered as crimes in your country?

How is illegal poaching described in the law of your country?

What does your country suggest to undertake against the illegal wildlife trade?

Helpful sources:

- ❖ <https://www.cites.org/> (recommended to scan through the convention)
- ❖ <http://www.onegreenplanet.org/environment/shocking-facts-about-how-the-illegal-wildlife-trade-drives-species-extinction/>
- ❖ http://www.unep.org/documents/itw/ITW_fact_sheet.pdf

- ❖ <http://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/19764/20160208/trading-extinction-reducing-illegal-animal-poaching-trafficking.htm>
- ❖ <https://www.unep-wcmc.org/>
- ❖ [http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/perspectives/ENVIRONMENT%20PA PERS%20DISCUSSION%20No.14%20LATEST\(1\).pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil-society/Portals/24105/documents/perspectives/ENVIRONMENT%20PA PERS%20DISCUSSION%20No.14%20LATEST(1).pdf)