

Environmental Committee

Topic 2 - Combating illicit wildlife trade

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- **Background information**

- Wildlife crime is a business, run by dangerous international networks, in which wildlife and animal parts are trafficked much like illegal drugs and arms. Much like illegal drug and arms networks, wildlife trade is a very profitable business and it involves billions of dollars. 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.
- Illicit wildlife trade is a threat to the entire world, because it directly impacts threatened species, and indirectly impacts countless other species. It is an overall threat to the species survival.

- **UN Involvement**

- The United Nations Environment Programme is working to address illegal trade in wildlife. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) hosts the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora, known as CITES, which regulates trade in roughly 5,800 species of animals and 35,000 species of plants to prevent overexploitation. UNEP supports the legal and sustainable management and trade of wildlife, in compliance with national and international law. Through a collaborative initiative, UNEP and the CITES Secretariat help countries and territories, upon their request, strengthen their environmental governance to meet CITES requirements to combat illegal

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trade in wildlife. This is done by designating at least one Management Authority and one Scientific Authority; prohibiting trade in specimens in violation of the Convention; penalizing illegal trade; and confiscating specimens illegally possessed. UNEP advocates for an end to illegal wildlife trade globally. UNEP is working with other United Nations agencies and secretariats such as CITES to stamp out illegal sale and trafficking in wildlife both domestically and internationally. It works to improve the enactment of national legislation and helps countries partner up to address transboundary issues of trafficked products at ports of entry. Globally, corruption is a serious problem that impedes combating the illegal wildlife trade. This is why, UNEP provides support through trainings of judges, law enforcement and custom officials on combatting wildlife crime and developing rule of law. It also tries to raise public awareness through social media campaigns.

- The United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has also made many General Assembly resolutions on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife.

- **Questions to consider**

- What is my countries stance on wildlife trade?
- Is my country already doing something to reduce wildlife trade?
- Is wildlife trade an issue in my country?
- Is my country funding any programs to combat wildlife trade?
- How can we ensure help globally?
- The question of cooperation in a national level. How can the countries help each other towards reducing illicit wildlife trade globally?
- How can more developed countries help less developed countries combat wildlife trades?
- Is there a way for countries to indirectly help support countries in which wildlife trade are a prominent issue?

- **Resources and useful links**

- A Global Collaboration to Fight Wildlife and Forest Crime
- <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/global-collaboration-fight-wildlife-and-forest-crime>
- Illegal wildlife trade
- <https://www.un.org/en/issue/378>
- Illicit wildlife trafficking
- <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/land-property-environment/illicit-wildlife-trafficking/>
- Strengthening the international legal framework for international cooperation to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife
- https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_31/ECN152022_L2_rev_in_COW.pdf
- Combatting Illicit Wildlife Trade and Corruption in Maritime Transport
- <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Facilitation/Pages/IllicitWildlifeTrade-default.aspx>
- ICCWC - International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime
- <https://cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc>