

## IWT – New Zealand Statement for Circulation

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**United Nations Environmental Assembly  
of the United Nations Environment Programme  
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Nairobi, Kenya**

### **Illegal Trade in Wildlife**

#### **Statement by New Zealand**

Chair, esteemed colleagues,

New Zealand is pleased to see the topic of illegal trade in wildlife on the agenda of this first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. As a country with a wide array of unique species, and therefore affected by the activities of wildlife criminals, this is an issue that deeply concerns us. While we hear much in the news about charismatic species such as elephants and rhinos, the fact is that many other species are also adversely affected by illegal trade.

Illegal trade in wildlife is a transnational crime – usually quite organised – that is extensive and felt globally. Therefore, any response must also be transnational and global. Success in combatting these crimes means that all countries must act cooperatively and effectively. To that end, we support international collaboration among relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international organisations to prevent illegal trade in wildlife and timber. We applaud the work of the five agencies who are actively undertaking such cooperation in the form of the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime – the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, the World Customs Organisation, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank, and INTERPOL.

We see a role for UNEP in collaborating with ICCWC [*pronounced eye-quick*], for example, through utilising its networks with the judiciary. UNEP could help raise awareness of the nature and severity of wildlife crime with the judicial community. In addition, UNEP could provide much-needed legislative assistance

to countries that require their laws to be strengthened in order to combat wildlife crime.

New Zealand's efforts to combat illegal trade in wildlife are focused primarily on issues and species of domestic concern, as well as those in the Pacific region. New Zealand's Wildlife Enforcement Group has been the primary means to prevent wildlife crime and enforce domestic legislation. The Group – which is a multi-agency collaborative initiative – has been active for over twenty years.

Addressing the continued poaching and smuggling of New Zealand endemic geckos is an important and long-standing domestic priority. The unique characteristics of our geckos – which are rare, and in some locales, sacred species – make them appealing to collectors worldwide. With increased protection of our geckos under CITES since March 2013, international tools to address this illegal trade are stronger. Nonetheless, we must maintain our efforts to impede the efforts of determined and ruthless wildlife criminals. On this note, we appreciate the ongoing cooperation of our colleagues in Spain and Germany to apprehend those who have stolen these treasures from New Zealanders.

Our focus on cooperation goes beyond our own borders. Since 2009, New Zealand has worked closely with our Pacific neighbours to bolster regional efforts to prevent illegal trade in wildlife. We have provided extensive assistance to a number of Pacific countries on implementation of international agreements and domestic regulations. Activities have included training workshops throughout the region, as well as the provision of legislative advice.

We also would like to emphasise the growing social, environmental and economic threats posed by illegal logging. New Zealand continues to support efforts to combat illegal logging at the national, bilateral, and multilateral levels. The New Zealand Government adopted a policy on illegal logging in 2009 that calls for engagement at all three levels.

To conclude, the poaching of any species is abhorrent and New Zealand is concerned – not only about the decline of elephants and rhinos, but about other

species that may not make international headlines – our geckos, the humble but valuable sea cucumbers, and rare parrots. We firmly believe that effective international cooperation among relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations is needed to prevent such poaching and illegal trade. Efforts must be deployed along the entire trade chain - from range States to transit nations and countries that are the final destinations and markets. To this end, we look forward to working with all partners, and together ensuring the long-term survival of our planet's species in the wild.