



Distr.: General
21 September 2017
Original: English



**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
Third session**

Nairobi, 4–6 December 2017
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Performance of the programme of work and budget,
including implementation of the resolutions of the
Environment Assembly**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/14 on illegal
trade in wildlife and wildlife products**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In May 2016, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme adopted resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. The present report provides an update on progress made in the implementation of resolution 2/14, as requested in paragraph 8.

* UNEP/EA.3/1.

I. Introduction

1. At its second session, held in May 2016, the United Nations Environment Assembly adopted resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, in which it requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to, inter alia, advance knowledge to underpin informed actions, including through the continuation of the assessment of the environmental impacts of illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife and its products and the development of an analysis of international best practices with regard to involving local communities in wildlife management as an approach to address the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products; to support efforts to raise awareness and promote behavioural change in consumer markets for illegally traded wildlife and its products, including flora and fauna; to continue to collaborate with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and other partners of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and relevant United Nations entities to support member States in implementing their commitments, including by continuing to support the activities of the African Elephant Action Plan; and to work with other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations to ascertain and document the current status of knowledge of crimes that have serious impacts on the environment. The present report provides an update on progress made in the implementation of resolution 2/14, as requested in paragraph 8 of the resolution. The progress made will contribute to expected accomplishment (b) under subprogramme 4, environmental governance, of the United Nations Environment Programme programme of work for 2016–2017 (“the capacity of countries to develop and enforce laws and strengthen institutions to achieve internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals and comply with related obligations is enhanced”).

II. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/14

2. The United Nations Environment Programme has worked with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the International Institute for Environment and Development to develop a thorough assessment of best practices in local community involvement in wildlife management. The analysis¹ has been shared widely for review with partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management² and indigenous peoples and local community networks. In the report, lessons learned from decades of experience in community-based wildlife management around the world are compared with recent experience gained since the beginning of the current wildlife trade crisis. The lessons from the past and the present are remarkably similar and include the need for realistic incentives, enabling environments and legitimate community governance institutions. The report concludes that, while the lessons on community engagement in wildlife management are clear and well known, there has been a chronic failure of implementation, particularly in relation to the necessary but politically challenging aspect of empowering local communities. During the current wildlife trade crisis, Governments and other actors have tended to implement increasingly militarized, enforcement-focused responses. Such approaches, the report notes, risk undermining both human rights and the effectiveness of wider conservation efforts. The report also highlights the need to enhance the voice of communities living with wildlife in decision-making at all levels, from the local to the international.

3. In the context of the African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, of which the Assembly also took note in resolution 2/14, the Environment Programme has been providing technical support to the African Union Commission to ensure the effective coordination of the implementation of the Strategy. As part of this work, the Environment Programme supported the preparation and holding of the inaugural meeting of the expert group for the implementation of the African Common Strategy on Combating Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, held in Addis Ababa from 19 to 21 September 2017.

¹ Available from <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11822/21968>.

² Current members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management include: the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Centre for International Forestry Research, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the secretariat of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation, the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, the International Trade Centre, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, TRAFFIC International – the wildlife trade monitoring network, and the United Nations Environment Programme (see www.fao.org/forestry/wildlife-partnership/93140/en/).

4. The Environment Programme, through the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, has initiated work to assess and quantify the multiple threats to wildlife and biodiversity, such as illegal trade in wildlife, as well as habitat conversion, hunting and invasive alien species. In a first analysis, the research has identified threat “hotspots” by mapping the spatial distribution of threats to species globally and nationally and identifying where multiple threats coincide and thus have simultaneous impacts on species, as a measure of threat intensity. Work has also been undertaken by the Centre to provide spatial analysis of the threats to wildlife posed by pollution in preparation for the current session of the United Nations Environment Assembly. The Centre has also conducted analyses of levels and trends in the legal trade in wildlife globally and at the regional level, and explored relationships between levels of legal and illegal trade in a variety of taxa of wildlife. The results of these analyses have been submitted for publication in the peer-reviewed scientific literature and made available at the regional level and at the most recent meetings of the conferences of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and to the Convention on Biological Diversity.
5. Key achievements in implementing the African Elephant Action Plan that were made possible through support from the African Elephant Fund include the review of wildlife laws and strict enforcement of sentencing for prosecuted poachers and traffickers in Ethiopia; the elimination of crop raiding and the prevention of elephants moving outside the Thurma Forest Reserve in Malawi; and the strengthened capacity of over 300 enforcement personnel in Ethiopia and Ghana in the conduct of anti-poaching missions and the identification, collecting and handling of wildlife products.
6. The Environment Programme supported the development and implementation of national legislation related to illegal trade in wildlife in four countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Plans are under way to extend technical legal assistance to seven other countries in various parts of the world. A study on the status, trends and gaps in the prosecution of environmental crimes in Latin America has been prepared. In addition, the Environment Programme co-sponsored the development and roll-out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime of a rapid reference guide and standard operating procedures for investigators and prosecutors of wildlife crimes in the United Republic of Tanzania.
7. Senior officials from 22 countries spanning Africa and Asia-Pacific advanced their common understanding of the key elements and provisions needed for effective legal frameworks and coordinated efforts to dismantle criminal networks involved in illegal trade in wildlife and forest products during the Africa-Asia-Pacific Symposium on Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Wildlife Crime, held in Bangkok on 4 and 5 July 2017³. The symposium was the first major event convened by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products, which is currently chaired by the Environment Programme⁴.
8. The Environment Programme, in collaboration with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), launched an expert process in June 2017 by convening the first meeting of the technical advisory committee to consider and review a draft report on the current status of knowledge on crimes that have a serious impact on the environment. Following the review by the technical advisory committee, the draft report was submitted to an expert group comprising representatives of member States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations for further review and input. The expert group met in Rome from 13 to 15 September 2017 to review the draft report. The review entailed providing extensive comments and observations based on the experts’ practical experience and knowledge. UNICRI is compiling and incorporating the experts’ input in the report before the anticipated release of an updated draft report on 18 October 2017.
9. The United Nations Wild for Life global campaign launched by the secretariat of the Environment Programme in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in May 2016 has now reached over 1 billion people around the world; received 300 million views for the #WildforLife hashtag in China alone; engaged 35 celebrity voices with a combined social media reach of 400 million; brought on 25 partners; and inspired 15,000 pledges to take action by using individuals’ own sphere of influence; while some 40,000 people have chosen a kindred species, done “the morph” and shared on social media. The Wild for Life World Pangolin Day video was watched by 15 million people in China in 48 hours, becoming the Environment Programme’s most watched video in China.

³ See www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/forest/wildlife-law-symposium.html and www.cms.int/en/eventcalendar/africa-asia-pacific-symposium-strengthening-legal-frameworks-combat-wildlife-crime.

⁴ See <https://www.un.int/news/inter-agency-task-force-launched-combat-illicit-wildlife-trade>.

10. Metrics show that this significantly contributed to awareness and public mobilization through pledge making. China announced a total ban on commercial ivory by the end of 2017; the Legislative Council of Hong Kong has agreed to consider the ban; and Angola closed the Benfica Market in Luanda and inventoried and destroyed its ivory stockpile by World Environment Day 2017.

11. The second year of the Wild for Life campaign builds on the awareness raised and the momentum generated by the Environment Programme, celebrities and partners at the global and regional levels. The Environment Programme has developed a handbook for national communication planners to help develop communication initiatives aimed at reducing the demand for wildlife and forest products. This tool should help the design of national communication-for-development strategies through advocacy, social mobilization and behavioural change communication to form a comprehensive multi-year programme with the final output of reduction in the demand for wildlife and forest products. A pilot activity in Viet Nam and Ethiopia will be carried out by the end of 2017 before being scaled up to regional workshops in 2018.

12. The achievements summarized above relate to all three performance indicators for expected accomplishment (b) under subprogramme 4, environmental governance, of the United Nations Environment Programme programme of work for 2016–2017.

13. The present report is timely, as it addresses important aspects of General Assembly resolution 71/326 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, adopted in September 2017. In particular, in the resolution, the General Assembly calls upon Member States to increase the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities, including from their local wildlife resources, and “to initiate or strengthen collaborative partnerships ... to enhance support for community-led wildlife conservation and to promote the retention of benefits by local communities for the conservation and sustainable management of wildlife.”

III. Recommendations and suggested action

14. On the basis of the findings of the analysis of best practices in community involvement in wildlife management, the United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to consider, in a resolution, urging member States, intergovernmental organizations, donors and civil society to ensure that any strategies, action plans, programmes and projects to combat the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife fully recognize, integrate and implement key insights from extensive research and practice on community wildlife management, including with respect to enforcement strategies. It could also urge member States to seek ways to enhance the opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities to present their views, priorities and perspectives in local, national and international policy and decision-making arenas relevant to wildlife, including, as appropriate, through the establishment of clear and accessible pathways for input, in order to enable meaningful engagement at all levels.

15. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish:

(a) To further request the Executive Director to provide member States with regular updates on the broader threats to wildlife and biodiversity, including from pollution and habitat loss, and to analyse such combinations of threats at various scales in order to help identify where additional conservation responses are most needed and to inform their effectiveness;

(b) To call upon member States to continue and scale up their efforts at the national level and through regional, interregional and international cooperation, to prevent, detect and address the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products;

(c) To encourage member States to develop and advance, with the support of the Executive Director and in cooperation with other relevant organizations, measures towards addressing crimes that have serious impacts on the environment;

(d) To call upon member States to amplify public engagement in tackling the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife in order to reduce demand for species threatened by trade and to empower local communities and actors to identify and report illegal wildlife products at the regional, national and local levels.