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**International environmental policy and
governance issues**

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

Report of the Executive Director

Introduction

1. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 2/14 on illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director of UNEP to continue to collaborate with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) 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 advancing 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; by supporting efforts to raise awareness and promote behavioural change in consumer markets for illegally traded wildlife and its products, including flora and fauna; by continuing to support the activities of the African Elephant Action Plan; and by facilitating an analysis of international best practices with regard to involving local communities in wildlife management as an approach to addressing the unsustainable use and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products. The Environment Assembly also requested the Executive Director, in paragraph 6 of the resolution, to support Governments in facilitating the development and implementation of national legislation related to illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife, and, in paragraph 7, to work with other relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations to ascertain and document the current status of knowledge of crimes having serious impacts on the environment, including illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife and its products.

2. The present report outlines the progress made in implementing resolution 2/14, and consequently also resolution 1/3, an earlier Environment Assembly resolution on the same topic. In doing so, it outlines how UNEP has responded to the mandates in resolutions 1/3 and 2/14 through three avenues:

* In accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly held on 8 October 2020 and at the joint meeting of the Bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Assembly is expected to adjourn on 23 February 2021 and resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

** UNEP/EA.5/1/Rev.1.

(a) Within the United Nations system, UNEP is leading efforts to produce the relevant high-level scientific assessments in close coordination with its World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), including the assessment of the environmental impact of illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife and its products and analysis of international best practices in local community involvement in wildlife management, to ensure that the best-available information is provided to Member States and to strengthen the evidence base for effective policy interventions and targeted awareness-raising, social mobilization and demand reduction strategies.

(b) Supporting Governments in developing and implementing the environmental rule of law remains an important mandate for UNEP in relation to its work on addressing poaching. UNEP continues to support countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America in reviewing and strengthening their national legal frameworks to combat wildlife crime and enhancing their enforcement capacity. It also hosts the secretariat of various biodiversity-related conventions, including CITES, and supports the CITES Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme.

(c) Reinforcing international efforts by Governments and local partners to develop and catalyse demand reduction strategies for illegally sourced wildlife products remains a major component of the work of UNEP to combat illegal trade in wildlife, which includes leveraging the high profiles of UNEP Goodwill Ambassadors and key opinion leaders through the Wild for Life campaign.

I. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/14

3. Under the programme of work, collaborative action by UNEP to respond to the mandates in resolutions 1/3 and 2/14 focused on the following areas.

A. Providing analysis and synthesis of available information on the extent of illegal trade in wildlife, the impacts of such trade and the effectiveness of responses in order to enhance political will and mobilize support for international cooperation to address illegal trade in wildlife

4. In terms of facilitating an analysis of international best practices with regard to involving local communities in wildlife management (resolution 2/14, para. 5 (e)), UNEP assessed best practices in local community involvement in wildlife management, drawing from diverse examples from around the world. The report *Wild Life, Wild Livelihoods: Involving Communities in Sustainable Wildlife Management and Combatting Illegal Wildlife Trade* (UNEP, 2018)¹ provides lessons learned and policy recommendations for addressing the unsustainable use of and illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products through community-inclusive approaches that strengthen benefits for the people living closest to wildlife.

5. UNEP-WCMC continued to provide technical support to work by the CITES secretariat to inform decision-making and implementation of the convention. It also continued to undertake targeted analyses on behalf of the CITES secretariat and to manage key CITES datasets, including the Checklist of CITES Species (checklist.cites.org), and the CITES Trade Database (trade.cites.org), which now contains more than 21 million records of international wildlife trade. UNEP-WCMC also continued to maintain Species+ (speciesplus.net) as an online resource for accessing information on species listed in CITES, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals and the European Union wildlife trade regulations. Recent analytical outputs from UNEP-WCMC focused on supporting key CITES processes, including the “Review of significant trade” and the “Review of trade in animal specimens reported as produced in captivity”, to facilitate better regulation of international trade in wildlife. An in-depth assessment of the conservation status of and trade in a West African rosewood species (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) was produced as an exceptional case for consideration by the CITES Plants Committee.

6. UNEP-WCMC initiated two significant projects to assess and quantify the multiple threats to wildlife and biodiversity, including hunting, agriculture, pollution, habitat conversion and invasive alien species. It developed several global spatial data layers concerning these various threats that can be used to inform policy- and decision-making. The layers will be available through data-sharing portals such as UNBiodiversity Lab, the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species

¹ Available at https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/22864/WLWL_Report_web.pdf.

website. Additional global spatial data layers on trade in wild meat and wildlife are in development and will be released over the coming years.

7. UNEP-WCMC, UNEP and partners conducted a study on the relationship between the legal and illegal trade in wildlife to inform trade regulations. The study,² based on seizures of wildlife goods imported into the United States of America and the European Union, highlighted the importance of accounting for known illegal trade when setting quotas and determining the level of legal trade that is sustainable, in order to strengthen non-detriment findings under CITES.

B. Strengthening legal and regulatory systems and promoting capacity development to effectively enforce wildlife and timber laws and tackle illegal trade in wildlife

8. UNEP developed global guidance for strengthening legal frameworks for licit and illicit trade in wildlife and forests products and provided for the translation of the guidance into French and Chinese (in partnership with the National Academy of Forestry and Grassland Administration of China). Drawing on best practices and lessons from natural resource management, trade regulation and criminal justice sectors, the guidance provides an overview of the current status of institutions and legal frameworks and recommendations related to the regulation of licit trade and prevention, detection and penalization of illicit trade in wildlife and forest products.

9. UNEP built on global best practices to support multiple countries in enhancing their national legislative and policy frameworks and capacities. In Lesotho, UNEP and the CITES secretariat reviewed draft legislation for the implementation of CITES to address a significant challenge that was preventing effective domestic implementation of the convention despite its ratification in 2004. A comprehensive analysis identified multiple legislative gaps, including weaknesses in issuing appropriate export permits and the lack of a national monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with permit conditions. The draft law prohibits trade in violation of the convention and provides for the designation of CITES authorities with clear mandates to implement the convention, the penalization of illegal trade, and the empowerment of the designated authority to confiscate illegally traded specimens.

10. In Zambia, UNEP strengthened the capacity of the Zambia Police Service to integrate environmental crimes into its enforcement portfolio. Twenty-four officers of various ranks participated in the first of a series of capacity-building exercises to introduce the main concepts and principles of environmental law and to inform the development of the new police training curriculum on environmental crime, intended for national roll-out. The new training curriculum used by the Government will ensure continuing education on environmental crime within the Zambia Police Service.

11. UNEP provided support to raise the awareness of the Judiciary of Zambia with respect to illegal trade in wildlife and other environmental crimes and to strengthen its related capacities. In late 2019, 25 members of the Judiciary participated in a UNEP workshop to strengthen their knowledge in this area. Topics included the fundamental concepts and principles of environmental law and relevant contemporary environmental law issues, including links between environmental law and human rights and sentencing for environmental offences, including wildlife crimes. As a result, a new training manual and curriculum was endorsed by the Chief Justice and is currently being used to train additional members of the Judiciary.

12. The 2018 Green Customs Initiative Guide to Multilateral Environmental Agreements was translated into Farsi and Dari to support improved capacity to address environmental crimes for customs and border agents in Iran and Afghanistan. The guide provides an overview of multilateral environmental agreements, their requirements related to trade in environmentally sensitive substances and commodities and the role of customs officers and border control officers in facilitating legal trade and preventing illegal trade.

13. UNEP and the CITES secretariat provided technical support to six countries in the West Asia region: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic. In July 2020, key representatives of the national CITES management authorities of those countries developed an action plan to improve implementation of the convention. Additional activities will be implemented to support those six countries and other West Asian countries in addressing specific technical matters

² Tittensor, Derek P. (2020), "Evaluating the relationships between the legal and illegal international wildlife trades", *Conservation Letters*, vol. 13, no. 5 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12724>).

related to the implementation of the convention during periods of restricted movement resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic.

14. UNEP continued to execute a \$1 million Global Environment Facility project to enhance legislative, policy and criminal justice frameworks to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Africa. UNEP also provided technical assistance and capacity-building in South Sudan (\$6 million project) and South Africa (\$5 million project) to strengthen cooperation and coordination between national and local institutions to combat wildlife crime and enhance skills in information management, crime scenes management and evidence collection to support the judicial process.

15. UNEP recognized and honoured exceptional actions to address illegal trade in wildlife at the fourth Asia Environmental Enforcement Awards in November 2019. The event was organized in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization and CITES and supported by the Government of Norway. The awards reward excellence in enforcement and encourage government officials and institutions in the region to combat environmental crime.

16. UNEP-WCMC provided ongoing technical support to the European Commission to support the implementation of the European Union wildlife trade regulations, which are the primary mechanisms for CITES implementation. Annual trade analyses and in-depth species assessments were completed.³ UNEP-WCMC provided technical support and analysis to the European Commission to improve implementation and enforcement of European Union regulations for timber and forest governance and trade.⁴

C. Increasing international advocacy efforts to develop and implement demand reduction strategies for threatened wildlife

17. Public awareness was raised through the Wild for Life campaign, a partnership between UNEP, UNDP, UNODC and CITES aimed at fostering an understanding of the social, economic and environmental impacts of illegal trade and the legal frameworks that protect CITES listed species. The campaign focuses on 26 endangered species and is available in nine languages. Using web stories, opinion editorials, social media, exhibitions and interactive experiences, users learn about the critical role species play in biodiversity health, the threats they face, including illegal trade, and the actions that can protect them.

18. The campaign engaged more than 40 partners for outreach and distribution of messaging and by the end of 2019 had reached more than 1.2 billion people (609 million via Weibo, 643 million via Instagram and 383 million via Twitter) and garnered more than 10 million likes, shares and comments. Species covered by the campaign, including the pangolin, rosewood, the helmeted hornbill, the snow leopard and the mako shark, received greater levels of protection from CITES. The communications industry recognized Wild for Life with six international awards.

19. Influencers with 43 million followers across social media channels supported the International Snow Leopard Day campaign launched by UNEP, in partnership with Adidas Runtastic, in October 2019. As a result, the UNEP website was visited by users in 10 cities that had never before shown up on UNEP analytics but that are significant snow leopard demand and/or trafficking hubs. Based on the success of this programme, Adidas Runtastic and UNEP again teamed up for the Run Wild challenge, timed to coincide with the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly in 2020, to galvanize one million runners, representing the one million species currently facing extinction.

20. For World Wildlife Day, observed on 3 March 2020 with the theme “Sustaining all life on earth”, the #WildforLife and #GlowingGone campaigns joined forces to educate users on the various threats to coral reefs, including illegal trade in wildlife. Likes, shares and comments indicated that the campaign engaged more than 4.2 million people, with global champions amplifying the campaign, including United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, Messenger of Peace Jane Goodall and Ocean Advocates Ashlan and Philippe Cousteau.

³ See, for example, the *EU Wildlife Trade 2018* report.

⁴ See examples under “Implementation and enforcement” at https://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/timber_regulation.htm.

II. Lessons learned

21. There is a need to encourage and support closer collaboration between the human, animal and environmental health communities in designing and implementing responses to illegal trade in wildlife and forest products as part of a One Health approach.
22. Indigenous peoples and local communities can play a key role in tackling illegal trade in wildlife and should be given more opportunities to present their views, priorities and perspectives in local, national and international policy- and decision-making arenas relevant to wildlife.
23. While illegal trade in wildlife remains an important threat to biodiversity, saving wildlife requires addressing the multiple, and often interacting, threats that wildlife faces, including from habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, invasive species and climate change.

III. Recommendations and suggested actions

24. The Environment Assembly may wish to consider strengthening the environment dimensions of the One Health approach and taking advantage of the expertise of UNEP and other environmental experts by including appropriate work in the mandate of UNEP and providing for expanded environmental expertise within the existing tripartite alliance between the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organization for Animal Health.
 25. The Environment Assembly may wish to consider encouraging Member States to develop and advance, with the support of the Executive Director, measures to address crimes that have a serious impact on the environment, as well as to sustain efforts to build the capacity of actors in the enforcement chain to fully appreciate the gravity of offenses relating to illegal trade in wildlife and forest products.
 26. The Environment Assembly may wish to consider urging Member States to consider ways to enhance opportunities for indigenous peoples and local communities to participate in decision-making arenas relevant to wildlife, including (as appropriate) by recognizing the need for this in official statements and establishing clear and accessible pathways for input, in order to enable deeper and more meaningful engagement at all levels.
 27. The Environment Assembly may wish to consider furthering the mandate of and support for the Executive Director to cover the broader threats to wildlife and biodiversity beyond illegal trade in wildlife, including through analysis and development of measures to address combinations of threats, as a means of identifying where strong and coordinated policy responses are most needed, both globally and at the national level.
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