

# United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

TOPIC A:

## **Increase in Wildlife Crimes: Species Trafficking**

**Undersecretary:**  
Paulina Cruz Tamayo

# INTRODUCTION

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), describes a wildlife crime as “the taking, trading (supplying, selling or trafficking), importing, exporting, processing, possessing, obtaining and consumption of wild fauna and flora, including timber and other forest products, in contravention of national or international law” (2020). While this type of crime is a great threat to the biodiversity in nature, it implicates far more complex issues that put the whole world at risk, such as endangering of species, threats to how ecosystems function, animal cruelty, health threats to other living species, deplete of natural resources, and political stability. Today it is one of the biggest transnational crimes, next to “drug trafficking, arms, and trafficking in human beings” (UNODC, n.d.).

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

In recent years, wildlife crime has seen a significant increase and the essence of the crimes have evolved with it. As the Coronavirus pandemic has shown, this issue is not only a threat to the environment, but to human health as well. “Three-quarters of all emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, according to the United Nations Environment Programme, transferred from animals to humans, facilitated by environmental destruction and wildlife crime” (UNODC, 2020). Not a single country can be attributed for more than 9% of the data recorded, identified traffickers are from 150 different nationalities, and not one species by itself contributes to more than 5% of the trafficking statistics; this proves that it is a worldwide issue and a global concern.

Mammals, reptiles, corals, plants, birds, molluscs, fish, and other taxonomic categories are being trafficked on a daily basis, and they each make up for 23%, 21.3%, 14.6%, 14.3%, 8.5%, 7.9%, 4.7%, and 5.7%, respectively. However, certain species have recently been on the spotlight due to the severe increase they have had on the illicit market: “In 2019 and in the first half of 2020, several major seizures of ivory, rhino horn, pangolin and rosewood have been recorded” (UNODC, 2020). Since the main objective of this is to generate profit, criminals tend to work across borders, making all countries the source, a transit region, or a destination of the trafficking of species. Additionally, because the transportation and financial aspects of it require an elaborated and quite complex network, corruption from people who hold high and respected positions across the globe is undeniable.

While some countries have been able to reinforce their policies regarding wildlife-related crimes, some others have had a harder time doing so as they face some of the following challenges: “poor governance, inadequate legislation; lack of equipment; limited training opportunities; difficulty accessing modern enforcement tools such as analytical and forensic science support; a lack of intelligence-gathering capacity and risk management practices; and a lack of awareness among prosecutors and the judiciary of the seriousness of wildlife crime” (CITES, 2020). However, another reason as to why it is an increasingly threatening breach of justice is due to the fact that in many places it has yet to be recognized as a serious and organized crime.

As the Coronavirus situation remains uncertain and precarious territory moving forward, so does the future of wildlife crimes. Due to the astounding increase that social media platforms and the internet have seen during this past year, many companies, schools, and small

businesses have adopted these new systems, and so has the wildlife illicit market. “Organized criminal groups are increasingly using a range of online platforms and technologies to facilitate the transnational trafficking of wildlife products. [...] Monitoring of online trade, and using available technology to track key hubs, patterns and players involved in the illegal trade, is critical to disrupting the organizations exploiting online platforms” (UNODC, 2020).

## UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION

In November 2010, The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) was launched in order to serve as a source of tools or services that national agencies dealing with wildlife and forest law enforcement policies might need to better handle the problems. This group consists of the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization, and the World Bank (UN, n.d.). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime (GPWLFC), launched in 2014, aims to raise awareness regarding this deeply-rooted concern, reduce and prevent the trade of protected wildlife and flora, and “improves cooperation and law enforcement and preventive capacity of Member States to address wildlife and forest crime as well as other forms of serious and organized crime” (UNODC, 2014).

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations address this concern in goals 14 and 15, making a global issue that is rapidly evolving.
- As technology advances and grows erratically, so does organized crime and illicit markets such as the wild flora and fauna one.
- It is extremely hard to keep track of every single activity regarding wildlife crime, as many species are not listed as illegal by CITES, trading that is not international might not be detected, and domestic markets are often not considered.

## QUESTIONNAIRE

- A. What is my country's position?
- B. What are my country's policies?
- C. What can my country do to solve this issue?
- D. Which countries can my delegation work with?
- E. What are three possible solutions?
- F. What has been done to solve the problem?

## USEFUL LINKS

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – World Wildlife Crime Report 2020:  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World\\_Wildlife\\_Report\\_2020\\_9July.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World_Wildlife_Report_2020_9July.pdf)
- CITES – Wildlife Crime: <https://cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc/crime.php>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – Wildlife and Forest Crime:  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/index.html>

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “World Wildlife Crime Report 2020”. (May 2020). UNODC. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World\\_Wildlife\\_Report\\_2020\\_9July.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World_Wildlife_Report_2020_9July.pdf)
- “Wildlife crime”. (2020). CITES. Retrieved from:  
<https://cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc/crime.php#:~:text='Wildlife%20crime'%20refers%20to%20the,of%20national%20or%20international%20law>.
- “Sustainable Development – Goal 15”. (n.d.). UN: Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15>
- “Wildlife and Forest Crime – Global Programme”. (n.d.). UNODC. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/wildlife-and-forest-crime/global-programme.html>
- “Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime – Annual Report 2014”. (2014). UNODC. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/WLFC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Wildlife/WLFC_Annual_Report_2014.pdf)