THE ASIAN REGIONAL PARTNERS FORUM ON COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME (ARPEC)
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE EMPORIUM
PRESENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

The effects of environmental crimes are wide ranging:
- They can directly threaten human health and the environment
- They can contribute to species loss
- They can deprive communities of livelihoods
- They can increase the probability of conflict and thereby pose a risk to human and even national security
- They can result in revenue loss for governments
- They can undermine the success of international environmental agreements
- Legitimate businesses can be undermined by illegal trade

Environmental crimes can be broadly defined as illegal acts which directly harm the environment.

Environmental crimes can be defined across five broad areas of offences which have been recognized by bodies such as the G8, INTERPOL, EU, UNEP and the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. These are:

- Illegal trade in wildlife
- Illegal trade in ozone-depleting substances (ODS)
- Dumping and illegal transport of various kinds of hazardous waste
- Illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing
- Illegal logging and trade in timber

Environmental crimes are serious, transnational and organized.

Environmental crime is currently one of the most profitable areas of criminal activity attracting organized criminal groups to its high profit margins and generally low risks.

Fighting environmental crimes to foster human development:

Communities frequently rely on natural resources—deriving essential goods and services, such as food, clean water, wood, and minerals. This form of asset becomes increasingly relevant for poor communities to build a sustainable livelihood. The unregulated exploitation or destruction/contamination of these natural resources can have dramatic or devastating consequences on the vulnerable communities that lack access to other physical, financial, social and human assets.

Tackling environmental crime should be considered as a fundamental responsibility which would help in reducing poverty, increasing food security and restoring the rule of law, good governance, and ecological sustainability.

การปราบปรามผู้ก่อเหตุอาชญากรรมสิ่งแวดล้อมเป็นหนึ่งสิ่งสำคัญในการลดปัญหาความยากจน การแย่งอำนาจ และอิทธิพลเสรีที่จะทำให้กฎหมายและอำนาจหน้าที่ของรัฐ รวมทั้งยังทำให้เกิดความสมดุลทางธรรมชาติอีกด้วย

Photos courtesy of: China customs, EIA, IUCN, TRAFFIC
IllegaL, UreguLated and Unreported (IUu) Fishing

Consumption of fish is an essential in the nutrition of millions of the world's population and contributes to a healthy diet through proteins, micro-nutrients, and fatty acids.

Illegal fishing is a serious issue that needs to be addressed in Asia and the Pacific in order to contribute to ameliorate poverty, food insecurity, and economic stagnation.

The illegal and unregulated activities of criminal syndicates are not only causing the depletion of the fish stocks – which might lead to a collapse in some fish populations – but they can also be affecting the ecological diversity, as it is demonstrated by the deteriorating condition of the Southeast Asian coral reefs.

The ecological impact could have significant adverse economic consequences, and the marine ecosystem may be affected in its capacity to restore carbon.

Fishery and Development

In general, the capacity of fisheries to contribute to the livelihood of poor households is limited. Fisheries can contribute to enhancing the resilience of vulnerable households, and help prevent them from falling into further poverty principally by reducing food insecurity, increasing employment opportunities, and providing social safety nets.

Fisheries can also contribute to the national wealth. For some developing countries in the Pacific, fishery exports account for 20-30% of total exports. The importance of adopting regulatory systems in the fish industry is also motivated by the need to prevent overexploitation of the available stock. Overfishing generally leads to a decline in the size and quality of fish, and in some cases can also cause fish stock collapses, with negative consequences for the livelihoods of people dependent on them.

Illegal Logging

Serious organized crime in the forestry and timber industries is one of the most pressing environmental issues facing the global community. Driven by the low risks and high profits of a largely unregulated international market for cheap timber and wood products, illegal logging is threatening precious forests from the Amazon, through West and Central Africa, to East Asia. The timber trade can also involve other major crimes such as forgery, document forgery, bribery, corruption of officials, human rights abuses, violence, and even murder.

Forests and Development

The forest products industry is a major source of income and employment in many countries, and over 90% of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty depend on forests for some part of their livelihood, according to the World Bank.

Forests can provide basic needs, such as food, building materials, firewood and medicines which improve food security and health conditions for local communities. Forests also preserve biodiversity and provide natural buffer against natural disasters such as floods.

Recently, an increasing number of scientists have advocated for the role that forests can play in mitigating global climate change, particularly through the capacity of forests to sequester and store carbon.

How Can Consumers Help?

Consumer markets for legal and sustainable timber products are growing, and companies are increasingly expected to provide evidence that the timber they use has been legally harvested. Consumers can help by seeking and purchasing licensed and certified wood products, especially those that support chain-of-custody systems such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). These efforts will help to ensure successful development of the world's legal and sustainable wood products markets.
ILLEGAL TRAFFIC OF HAZARDOUS WASTE UNDER BASEL CONVENTION

Unscrupulous waste trade became a serious concern in the 1980s due to three converging factors: increasing amounts of hazardous waste, inadequate processing plants, and stricter regulations in the developed world with growing environmental awareness. Managing special waste streams properly became expensive. Filthy shipments started traveling round the world. To avoid tightening environmental regulations in industrialized countries, companies used “toxic ships” to transport their hazardous waste to Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and other regions. Once on shore, the shipments were dumped indiscriminately, spilled accidentally or managed improperly, resulting in contaminated land, water and air.

The Basel Convention is an international agreement which regulates the movement of hazardous waste between countries. The Convention sets up a series of procedures which controls the export of hazardous waste, including such day-to-day items as used lead-acid batteries, household waste, and used oils for disposal. The Convention’s primary aim is to protect human health and the environment from the harm posed by such shipments.

SCALE OF ILLEGAL TRADE OF HAZARDOUS WASTE

- The United States Government estimated that US $10-12 billion was earned from the smuggling of waste.
- Based on the report of Basel Convention Secretariat in 2001, there are at least 8.5 million tonnes of hazardous waste being moved between countries each year. One project undertaken in 13 European countries in 2006 found that over half of the waste shipments examined were illegal.

WASTE AND DEVELOPMENT

Workers, including children, who are employed to dispose of wastes, in unsafe and unregulated conditions, are particularly vulnerable to the toxic chemicals which may be contained in these wastes. The detrimental consequences resulting from the improper treatment of some types of wastes could affect generations to come. Hazardous wastes, if improperly handled, can have serious effects on human health and the environment. Dumping of waste which contains hazardous chemicals can negatively affect water supplies and can contaminate land. Preventing illegal traffic of hazardous waste can contribute to improving human health, particularly among the poor, as well as protecting the environment from further degradation, thereby leading to a general improvement in the quality of life.
illegal trade in ozone depleting substances

significance depletion of the ozone layer is due to human activity introducing artificially high quantities of chlorine, bromine and other ozone depleting substances (ODS) into the stratosphere, where these chemicals destroy ozone molecules. widely used chemical compounds are to blame - especially chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) used as refrigerants and halons used as fire suppressants.

in 1987, global concern over the threat posed by ODS led to the formation of the montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer. since then it has been ratified by 196 nations, and now has universal ratification. the protocol established legally binding controls on the national production and consumption of ODS with complete phase-out as the final goal, allowing the ozone layer to recover.

scale of illegal ODS trade

a UNEP report on "illegal trade in ozone depleting substances" (2001), stated that "by 1996, illegal ODS trade had grown to an alarming level. though reliable figures on the scope of illegal trade are difficult to come by, it is estimated that between 16,000 and 38,000 tonnes of illegal CFCs were traded worldwide during 1995. by the end of the last decade, the volume of illegal trade in CFCs had declined in developed countries.

in the mid-1990s, illegal trade in chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) was estimated at up to 20,000 tonnes per year, worth US$ 150-300 million -equivalent to over 12% of global ODS production (EIA, 2006a). more recent estimates, from the early 2000s, suggest that smuggling of ODS represents 10-20% of the legitimate trade in ODS. this is equivalent to 7,000 - 14,000 tonnes per year, with a value of US$ 25-60 million (EIA, 2006a; CH & EIA, 2006).

ozone depleting substances and development

the ozone layer protects the earth's inhabitants and ecosystem from harmful UV radiation, and is essential for life on earth. it absorbs most of the harmful ultraviolet-B radiation from the sun and completely screens out lethal UV-C radiation. when the ozone layer is depleted, increased UV-B is allowed to reach the earth. this can lead to more skin cancers, eye cataracts, weakened immune systems, reduced plant yields, damage to ocean ecosystems and reduced fishing yields, adverse effects on animals, and more damage to some materials such as plastics. therefore reducing the use and trade of ODS can contribute to improving human health, food security and ecosystem integrity.
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ARPEC Awareness Event Partners

ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN)

ASCE is the Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) is an association of 10 member countries:

ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) is an association of 10 member countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Its mission is to promote the effective implementation of national environmental laws and regulations, to facilitate cooperation among member countries in the field of environmental crime prevention and control, and to undertake other activities necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

http://www.asean-wen.org

FREELAND

FREELAND, a non-profit organization dedicated to ending the illegal wildlife trade, is one of the leading organizations in the world working to combat the illegal wildlife trade, which is responsible for the massive loss of biodiversity and the extinction of many species. FREELAND works in Asia, Africa, and Latin America to stop the illegal trade and protect endangered species.

http://www.freeland.org

IUCN

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, is the world's largest and oldest global environmental network. It brings together governments, non-governmental organizations, scientists, businesses, farmers, and others to set the agenda, share knowledge, align partnerships, and influence daily decisions about the natural world.

http://www.iucn.org

UNEP

UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, is the world's leading environment organization, providing leadership and partnership on environmental issues to enable people to live in harmony with nature and to develop sustainable well-being.

http://www.unep.org

 Trafficking in Wildlife Crime

TRAFFIC is an intergovernmental, non-governmental organization that provides information and expertise to governments and other agencies to protect endangered species from commercial exploitation and prevent the trafficking of wildlife.

http://www.traffic.org

INTERPOL

INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization, providing a forum for police forces throughout the world to share information and to cooperate on crimes and criminal matters.

http://www.interpol.int

World Customs Organization (WCO)

WCO is the World Customs Organization. It is the only international organization in which governments are represented with a single vote, regardless of the country's size. Its mission is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of customs administration and to foster international cooperation in the field of customs activities.

http://www.wcoomd.org/home.html

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

WWF is a global conservation organization that works to conserve the natural world’s diversity and reduce the most pressing threats to the environment and humanity.

http://www.panda.org/th/

Think Green

Think Green is a member of the United Nations Environment Programme’s Climate Neutral Network.

http://www.thinkgreen.com

Every action, no matter how small, can make a world of difference.
Wildlife trade is any sale or exchange of wild animal and plant resources by people. This can involve live animals and plants or a diverse range of products needed or prized by humans—including skins, medicinal ingredients, tourist curios, timber, fish and other food products. Most wildlife trade is probably traded within national borders.

Wildlife is traded for food, fuel, fodder, building materials, clothing and ornaments, sport, healthcare (from herbal remedies, traditional medicines to ingredients for industrial pharmaceuticals), religion, and/or collections.

There are many reasons why wildlife is traded:

- Traditional medicine
- Pet trade
- Wild or exotic meat
- Trophies, decorations and luxury items

The illegal wildlife trade

Southeast Asian wildlife is commonly exported to the US, the EU, Japan and increasingly also to China. South American and African wildlife is generally imported mainly into Southeast Asia on transit to other nations. Southeast Asia serves as a transit point for illegal wildlife trade and it is therefore the responsibility of ASEAN nations to play an important role in preventing illegally traded wildlife and products from reaching their final destination.

Currently, 12,000 species are in danger of extinction, of which 12% are in Southeast Asia alone.

Environmental Crimes

Wildlife and Development:

Poor people in remote and marginal areas rely heavily on natural resources for collecting food, clothes, medicines, and other products. As a result, if the quality of wild resources declines, the impact on the poor will be significant, especially in terms of loss of livelihood opportunities and increased vulnerability.

Further contribution to livelihoods through wildlife is provided by formal and informal employment especially in the tourism industry. Wildlife conservation/protective contributions contribute to wider environmental sustainability. Wildlife resources can become a source of income for poor communities when sustainably harvested and traded and can also support nature-based tourism.

Trophies, decorations and luxury items

Many rural communities around the world, especially those living in and around protected and forested areas, depend on wild meat. Sometimes, the meat is consumed as a sign of status and wealth, but alongside this there is also the belief that wild or ‘exotic’ meat contains properties which boost strength, health and sexual desire. Many animals are protected and cannot legally be killed for food.

Animals of almost all descriptions and their parts are used around the world for trophies, decorations, and luxury items. Items made from protected animals are illegal.