**Working Group of Government Experts on Technical Assistance, 14th Session**

**Item 4 Other matters**

**Conference Room Paper: Strengthening the international legal framework for international cooperation to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife**

Vienna, 29-30 May 2023

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Thank you, chair.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

* At the CCPCJ last week, I had the honour to present Conference room paper E/CN.15/2023/CRP.3 entitled “Strengthening the international legal framework for international cooperation to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife”. This conference room paper was prepared pursuant to resolution 31/1 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice with the same title, and it reproduces information submitted by Member States and the European Union in response to note verbale CU 2023/14/DTA/OCB/CSS of 1 February 2023. This is a shorter version of the oral report.
* Within the deadline of 14 April 2023, contributions were received from sixty (60) Member States and the European Union representing all regions of the world. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all responding States and national experts. Please let me proceed to the findings.
* First, more than half of the responding States consider that the current international legal framework to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife contains gaps. Some responding States highlighted the absence of an international legal instrument focusing on criminalization of illicit trafficking in wildlife. Many States emphasised lack of harmonization and the need to strengthen domestic legal frameworks. Many States also stated that the existing international legal instruments are underutilised and that their application is inconsistent. (Question 1)
* Second, proposals to fill the gaps in the international legal framework include adoption of a definition as well as criminalization of illicit trafficking in wildlife. Some responding States also mentioned the need to expand the scope to other forms of crimes that affect the environment. Many States emphasised the need for capacity building and training of law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders; increased cooperation both at national and international levels; development of networks (including databases) to exchange information; as well as increased public awareness and education (Question 2)
* Third, more than half of the responding States expressed support for the potential of an additional protocol on illicit trafficking in wildlife to the Organized Crime Convention, while some States found the existing legal framework to be sufficient. Many States did not give a conclusive response to the question but expressed the need for further assessment on the existing legal framework. The purpose of such an assessment would be to identify possible loopholes and to improve the application, effectiveness and implementation of the existing legal framework, including for purposes of international cooperation. Some States were of the view that the scope of a possible additional protocol should be extended to include other crimes that affect the environment. (Question 3)
* When it comes to implementation of the Organized Crime Convention in combating illicit trafficking in wildlife, all but four States indicated that illicit trafficking in wildlife is criminalized in their country. Most States responded that it constitutes a serious crime, as defined in article 2, paragraph (b) of the Convention. (Question 6 (a) and (b))
* Most of the responding States have mechanisms in place to hold a legal person liable in relation to illicit trafficking in wildlife through criminal, administrative or civil liability. (Question 7 (a) and (b)).
* Most of the responding States use financial investigation techniques in preventing, investigating and prosecuting illicit trafficking in wildlife, which in most cases constitutes a predicate offence to money-laundering. (Question 8 (a) and (b))
* Although a little over half of the responding States responded that they have taken measures to provide assistance to and protection of witnesses and victims, many States either responded that such measures do not exist, or no response was provided. (Question 9)
* On behalf of UNODC, I would like to express our gratitude to the Government of France for the funding provided towards the implementation of the resolution.
* Subject to availability of further extra-budgetary resources to produce a report in all official languages of the UN, UNODC stands ready to compile such a report, summarizing the responses. Such a report could be submitted to the CCPCJ at its reconvened session in December this year or at its 33th session in 2024.

We remain at your disposal for any further information on the conference room paper and implementation of the resolution.

Thank you, Chair.