

UN CCPCJ Thematic Discussion on Implementation of the Kyoto Declaration

Thematic Discussion Session 1: 10 November 2021: Addressing the causes, including the root causes, of crime - Evidence-based crime prevention - Tailor-made crime prevention strategies

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Thank you Chair and I address you today as the Chair the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime.

Distinguished delegates, the environmental realities we are confronting today are rapidly changing. We are still feeling the full brunt of a pandemic, which most likely had its origins in a wild animal, there are hundreds of thousands of new viruses that could spill over from wildlife to humans, we are struggling to combat climate change, and facing the prospect of one million species going extinct over the coming decades.

All of these global crises have one thing in common – they are exacerbated by the illicit trafficking of wild animals and plants.

As we speak, States are meeting in Glasgow to agree on how to enhance efforts to tackle climate change, and will meet in Kunming next May to agree on a new Global Biodiversity Framework. The achievement of both, along with the SDGs, is inextricably linked to how well we can prevent and combat wildlife crime.

Yet, notwithstanding the destructive and high-risk nature of these crimes, there is no global agreement on wildlife crime. The stark reality is that our current international criminal law framework is not oriented towards addressing today's global environmental realities.

It is for that reason the Presidents of Angola, Costa Rica and Gabon have called for a new global agreement on wildlife crime that embeds preventing and combating these crimes into the international criminal law framework, taking the form of a Fourth Protocol under the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime.

This visionary call is made by the Presidents of three countries rich in wild fauna and flora, recognising that global aspirations to protect biodiversity, tackle climate change and prevent the next pandemic will not be met, if we cannot scale up efforts to tackle wildlife crime. Wildlife crimes are not trade-related matters, they are serious crimes: it is time we treat them as such.

The call made by the three President's aligns with the Kyoto Declaration, which, "in view of rapidly changing realities", declares the need "for timely adaptation and, if the need arises, strengthening of the international legal framework for international cooperation on criminal matters."

If we are to tackle wildlife crime at its roots, we need a heightened effort on combating the trafficking, including through destination States criminalising the import of any illicitly sourced wildlife and wildlife products, and to seriously scale up their cross-border cooperation and demand reduction efforts.

By heeding the call of the Presidents of Angola, Costa Rica and Gabon, it will be the local and indigenous communities living amongst wildlife, legitimate investors, and the Governments of source countries, as well as our global biodiversity, climate, health, and security, that will benefit from the world's wildlife, and not organised criminals.

Distinguished delegates, if we are to keep pace with these rapidly changing realities, we need to further strengthen the international legal framework.