

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
14 May 2021

English only

**Commission on Crime Prevention
and Criminal Justice****Thirtieth session**

Vienna, 17–21 May 2021

Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Integration and coordination of efforts by the
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by
Member States in the field of crime prevention and
criminal justice****Statement submitted by Born Free Foundation, a
non-governmental organization in special consultative
status with the Economic and Social Council****

The Secretary-General has received the following paper, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* [E/CN.15/2021/1](#).

** Issued without formal editing.



Written statement submitted by Born Free Foundation¹

Theme: The need for a wildlife crime Protocol under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Statement from the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime

Illicit trafficking in wild fauna and flora is fuelled by corruption, it deprives governments of revenue, has a devastating impact on wildlife, local communities, national economies, national and regional security, and entire ecosystems, including their ability to sequester carbon, and it poses a risk to public health and animal health.

The importance of tackling illicit wildlife trafficking has been the subject of three United Nations General Assembly Resolutions, in [2015](#), [2017](#) and [2019](#), among others.

According to the [UN IPBES \(2019\)](#), over one million species will go extinct over the coming decades if we do not change course. It describes five major threats to nature: amongst them is overexploitation, including through illegal trade in wildlife.

COVID-19 most likely had its origins in wildlife, as have previous pandemics. The [UN IPBES \(2020\)](#) estimates that 1.7 million undiscovered viruses are thought to exist in wild animals, about half of which could spill over to people, including through illegal trade, markets, and consumption.

Nature-based climate solutions can offer about one-third of the cost-effective carbon dioxide mitigation needed between now and 2030. The [World Bank](#) tells us that the illegal trade in fish, timber and other wildlife, degrades ecosystems and their ability to mitigate climate change and estimates the value of these impacts at between \$1–2 trillion a year.

Yet, despite the severe impacts of wildlife crimes, we still do not have a global agreement on combating and preventing illicit trafficking in wildlife, as we do for example on human trafficking.

Our Initiative is advocating for a new Protocol on combating and preventing the illicit trafficking of wildlife under the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).

We have prepared a draft Protocol – the “[Protocol against the Illicit Trafficking in Specimens of Wild Fauna and Flora](#)” – to illustrate the potential form and content of a Protocol. It is a working draft intended to help inform discussions on the possible benefits of a Protocol.

If a new UNTOC Protocol against the illicit trafficking of wildlife is negotiated and adopted, it will be the first time that a crime that has a significant impact on the environment is specifically embedded into the international criminal law framework.

It would signify a powerful and unequivocal acknowledgement by States of the importance of preventing and combating these serious crimes in recognition of their devastating consequences, and of the need to seriously scale up our collective response if we want to end them.

Given what we know today about the scale, nature and severe consequences of these serious crimes, now is the time to take our next leap forward in working together to end them.

John E. Scanlon AO
Chair, Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime,
on behalf Steering Group Member The Born Free Foundation

¹ On behalf of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime.