

2022 CCPCJ Expert Discussions on Crimes that Affect the Environment

Thematic session 3: Strengthening international cooperation to address crimes that affect the environment

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Invited Expert

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'Scaling up cooperative efforts to end wildlife crime will benefit the environment, people and economies'

SLIDE 1: TITLE SLIDE

Thank you Chair.

While there is a wide array of crimes that can affect the environment, as yet, there is no agreed definition of such crimes. We do, however, have a good sense of the main ones, and we also know that their scale, nature and consequences vary.

There are common threads to these crimes, but they are not all the same, and the international response needs to be tailored to fit the circumstances.

SLIDE 2: IPBES/WORLD BANK

Reports from IPBES, UNEP, UNODC, the World Bank, amongst others, graphically describe the severe environmental consequences of wildlife crime, for our climate, ecosystems, wild animals and plants, as well as for human and animal health. But the damage goes deeper than that; we know these crimes involve the theft of vital natural resources from local and indigenous communities, they discourage legitimate investors, and undermine the governments of source countries – by depriving them of revenue, fuelling corruption, destroying livelihoods, injuring and killing rangers, and creating national and regional instability.

SLIDE 3: COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

Over the past 12 years, I have dedicated much of my time to galvanising support amongst countries, law enforcement agencies, and many others, to combat and prevent wildlife crime. As [CITES Secretary General from 2010-2018](#), I led efforts to establish and institutionalise the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime, worked with Gabon and Germany on the first ever UNGA Resolution (on tackling illicit wildlife trafficking), with Thailand on adopting 3rd March as UN World Wildlife Day, the GEF and the World Bank on creating the Global Wildlife Programme, and with UNODC on its first World Wildlife Crime Report.

SLIDE 4: WILDLIFE CRIME CONTINUES TO ESCALATE

I have seen for myself the progress we have made through this heightened international cooperation. These endeavours have resulted in greater attention and resources being dedicated to the issue. Yet, notwithstanding, we are still nowhere near ending wildlife crime. Instead, we see these crimes continue to escalate against a backdrop of rapidly changing environmental, human health, and security challenges.

Just last week park rangers were tragically killed in an ambush in W National Park, Benin. Horrific incidents like these are happening far too often. We must better tackle the demand and the trafficking to relieve the pressure on our brave rangers who are serving in the front lines.

There comes a point when one must recognise that what is being done is not enough. Our current international criminal law framework is not fit for purpose in addressing today's global environmental realities, especially as it relates to the scourge of wildlife crime.

SLIDE 5: FOUR PRESIDENTS

It is for these reasons that the Presidents of Angola, Costa Rica, Gabon, and, as from today, the President of Malawi, have called for a new global agreement on wildlife crime. And they propose to do this by making the best use of the UNTOC (UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime), though adopting an additional Protocol on wildlife crime.

This visionary call is made by the Presidents of four biodiverse rich, source countries that are deeply committed to combating wildlife crime. They have recognised that our global agreements and aspirations to protect our biodiversity on land and at sea, tackle climate change, prevent the next pandemic and achieve sustainable development, will not be met, unless we seriously scale up our cooperative efforts to tackle wildlife crime.

The call made by the four Presidents aligns with the Kyoto Declaration (adopted at last years' UN Crime Congress), which, "in view of rapidly changing realities", declares the need for "timely adaptation" and ("if the need arises") for the, "strengthening of the international legal framework for international cooperation on criminal matters", and at your 31st Session, you will have the opportunity to agree to explore the potential benefits of an additional Protocol on wildlife crime.

SLIDE 6: CITES

I am often asked about CITES, which I know well. It sets rules regarding international trade in wildlife for about 38,000, or 0.5%, of the world's eight million species. We made best use of CITES over the last decade to galvanise collective action. It's an important Convention but it is not a Convention to combat wildlife crime. That responsibility resides right here in Vienna. Wildlife crimes are not trade-related matters, they are serious crimes: it is time we unequivocally treat them as such.

SLIDE 7: END WILDLIFE CRIME

We need to keep pace with our rapidly changing realities. To seriously tackle wildlife crime, including its roots causes, commitments to scale-up cooperation must be embedded into the international legal framework. For example, States could agree to criminalise the import of any illicitly sourced wild animal or plant, whether protected under international, or national law, which would represent a wonderful expression of comity, or a mutual respect for one another's laws, and agree upon specific, well-targeted measures to prevent these crimes, including to discourage demand.

It's 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 should benefit from the world's wildlife, and not organised criminals. Achieving that aspiration is in everyone's interest, and if States decide to make the best use of the UNTOC, it will go a long way towards making that aspiration a reality.

Thematic session 3: Strengthening international cooperation to address crimes that affect the environment (16 February 2022) When discussing international cooperation to address crimes that affect the environment, participants may wish to discuss how the international community can make the best use of existing international instruments and strengthen regional and international cooperation among Member States, including through cooperation networks. In addition, participants may wish to discuss efforts to strengthen and expand technical assistance and capacity building to enhance inter-agency cooperation and coordination.