

32nd session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, May 2023

Oral statement by the Born Free Foundation on behalf of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime

Agenda item 6d: Other crime prevention and criminal justice matters

Thank you Chair.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to make this statement on behalf of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime, of which Born Free Foundation is a founding member.

A year ago, this Commission adopted resolution 31/1 on “Strengthening the international legal framework for international cooperation to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife”.

The resolution invited “Member States to provide the UNODC with their views on possible responses including the potential of an additional protocol to the UNTOC, to address any gaps that may exist in the current international legal framework to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in wildlife”. The information provided by Member States and compiled by UNODC has been shared in the form of the Conference Room Paper we are considering.

A preliminary analysis of the responses, carried out by the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime at the request of Angola and Gabon, reveals that, of the 53 Member States expressing a view on a possible additional protocol to prevent and combat wildlife trafficking, 75% were either in favour of a protocol or open to discussing it, with some requesting further information or suggesting its scope be broadened to include other environmental crimes.

In addition, 50% of responding states acknowledged there are gaps in the international legal framework to prevent and combat trafficking in wildlife, with a further 20% recognising a series of challenges. International co-ordination was seen as a particular concern as states grapple with expansive and increasingly sophisticated networks of wildlife traffickers across the globe, as well as the current diversity of national wildlife crime legislation.

Madam Chair, illicit wildlife trafficking is serious, organised, transnational, and increasing. It contributes to the extinction risk facing countless species of wild animals and plants, negatively impacts on ecosystems and their ability to sequester carbon, poses a threat to national and regional stability, undermines good governance and the rule of law, and increases the likelihood of zoonotic pathogen emergence. It is also closely tied to other forms of serious crime, such as corruption, fraud and money laundering.

The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime urges all Member States to lend their support to the development and implementation of an international agreement in the form of an additional UNTOC Protocol on preventing and combating wildlife trafficking. Given what we know today about the scale, nature and severe consequences of illicit wildlife trafficking, now is the time for the international community to take the next step forward.

Alongside representatives of the governments of Angola and Peru, the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime is hosting a side-event tomorrow at 1pm tomorrow in Room MOE79, entitled ‘Strengthening the international legal framework against illicit wildlife trafficking’, at which these issues will be discussed, and which delegates are invited to attend.