

Forum: Environmental Commission (ENV)
Question of: Measures to combat wildlife trafficking and crime
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Introduction

Wildlife trafficking and crime, to this day, still remains a large and deadly business. Wildlife trafficking refers to the criminal act of either smuggling, poaching, or trading captured, endangered, or protected species of the environment.¹ With increasing consumer demand and transnational organized criminal networks, this illegal trading has evolved into one of the largest black markets in the world, and trade monitoring networks presume this market to be worth billions of dollars. This comes as a result of several factors, and such criminal network activities have far-reaching effects.

There are several causes of illicit wildlife trafficking. First and foremost, it is not strictly restricted due to the lack of prohibition laws.² In many countries, the punishment for this crime remains far less harsh than others. For instance, in India, the conviction of three years in prison of a heavy poacher is a rarity.³ In addition, in 2015, it was reported that Italian hunters were taking advantage of the inconsistent law application, as well as the unprotected and open borders to poach over 120,000 songbirds.⁴ Some governments continue to maintain their lenient policies because they receive direct benefits; government officials are often caught in bribery or corruption as beneficiaries of trafficking and poaching.⁵ Hence, criminals continue illegal acts under their protection.

Also, wildlife crime has a very high demand, as there are countless uses of such smuggled animal parts. Hence, it becomes even more difficult to handle this issue on a broader scale. One of these include the claimed medical and religious values of such wildlife. For instance, Tibetan monks continue to hunt

¹ KKIENERM. 2020. "Wildlife, Forest & Fisheries Crime Module 3 Key Issues: Criminalization of Wildlife Trafficking." Unodc.org. 2020. <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/wildlife-crime/module-3/key-issues/criminalization-of-wildlife-trafficking.html>.

² "Why Law Enforcement Is Essential to Stopping Illegal Wildlife Trade." 2017. World Bank Blogs. July 27, 2017. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/why-law-enforcement-essential-stopping-illegal-wildlife-trade>.

³ Adek, Baishali. "India's top poacher sentenced to three years in jail in a rare conviction." *India Today*, November 23, 2017. Accessed July 23, 2022. <https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/india-top-poacher-sentenced-three-years-jail-rare-conviction-1092330-2017-11-23>.

⁴ Dale-Harris, Luke. 2015. "The Massacre of Europe's Songbirds." *Newsweek*. Newsweek. February 7, 2015. <https://www.newsweek.com/2015/02/13/massacre-europes-songbirds-304716.html>.

⁵ Martini, Maira. *Wildlife crime and corruption*. Edited by Marie Chêne and Aled Williams. Report no. 367. February 15, 2013. Accessed July 23, 2022. https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/367_Wildlife_Crimes_and_Corruption.pdf.

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rare and endangered animals due to their so-called high religious value. Traditional Chinese medicine also includes use of animals such as turtles that are utilized in the form of powder.⁶

Carpet making, medicine development, fashion design, and exotic cooking are a few out of the many sources of wildlife trafficking demand, but the most common is, arguably, the simple trade for cash. The quantity of wildlife crime matches up with the extensive demand.⁷ In India alone, there are roughly 100 million tons of varied fish, 1.5 million live birds, and 440,000 tons worth of medical herbs, fauna, and flora circulating in the illegal market that increases in size by day.⁸

Human expansion is another root cause; in order to account for the constantly growing human population, there are invasions of animal habitats, and animals are even killed off in exchange land area to develop roads, residences, and agricultural practices. Some examples of these include deforestation, trawling, dredging rivers, and other forms of urbanization.⁹

One major issue that comes as a result of wildlife crime is the extinction of animal and plant species. This is in fact the prime reason as to why there are more animals that are now labeled as extinct, near extinct, or endangered.¹⁰ Over 100,000 African elephants were poached for their ivory tusks over the course of three years. Each year, more than a thousand rhino horns are sought out, and as of March of 2020, there are only two Northern white rhinos left in the world.¹¹ Several other animals are left at high risk for certain qualities including pangolins and most of the tiger species family. This is interrelated with biodiversity as with a shrinkage in the variety of plants, animals, and other organisms, the ecosystem will experience multiple failures (ie: resilience to climate change).

Another consequence of this situation is the resulting imbalance in ecosystems. One essential part of the food chain is the keystone species. These species are the organisms that keep the food chain intact, and all other organisms rely on the keystone species. Hence, if wildlife crime is imposed on the keystone

⁶ Master, Farah. 2019. "As China Pushes Traditional Medicine Globally, Illegal Wildlife Trade Flourishes." U.S. March 28, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-tcm-idUSKCN1R90D5>.

⁷ KKIENERM. 2020. "Wildlife, Forest & Fisheries Crime Module 1 Key Issues: Locations and Activities Relating to Wildlife Trafficking." Unodc.org. 2020. <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/wildlife-crime/module-1/key-issues/locations-and-activities-relating-to-wildlife-trafficking.html>.

⁸ "Unsustainable and Illegal Wildlife Trade." 2018. WWF. 2018. https://www.panda.org/discover/our_focus/wildlife_practice/problems/illegal_trade/.

⁹ Ritchie, Hannah, and Max Roser. 2021. "Biodiversity." Our World in Data. April 15, 2021. <https://ourworldindata.org/poaching-and-wildlife-trade>.

¹⁰ Hall, Jani. 2019. "Poaching Animals, Explained." Animals. National Geographic. February 12, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/poaching-animals#:~:text=Illegally%20taking%20animals%20from%20the%20wild%20threatens%20many%20species%20with%20extinction.&text=Wild%20animals%20are%20being%20poached,captured%20from%20their%20native%20habitats..>

¹¹ "Northern White Rhino." 2022. Fauna & Flora International. Fauna & Flora International. May 10, 2022. <https://www.fauna-flora.org/species/northern-white-rhino/#:~:text=There%20are%20now%20just%20two,rendering%20the%20entire%20subspecies%20extinct..>

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species, every sector of the ecosystem will take a significant hit.¹² For instance, if lions and tigers are targeted, the gazelles will be left to feed excessively on grass, potentially leading to desertification.

Humans are also affected by this issue. One way in which they are affected is associated with deadly violence involving poachers and rangers. National Geographic cites that there were more than a thousand rangers that were shot or killed by poachers during this decade in Africa for the preservation and protection of wildlife.¹³ Additionally, this issue leads to the depletion of natural resources, threatening the human population's nutritional and economic security. For instance, food systems become largely nonfunctional without elements such as land, soil, oxygen, and fossil fuels.¹⁴

Both humans and animals are highly prone to biosecurity risks that come with wildlife abuse. For instance, in the case of exotic species that are trafficked and then released back into the environment, any of the transferred potential seeds, parasites, bacteria, or viruses would be in the wild. Oftentimes, this finds its way into livestock, aquaculture, and agriculture, and one example of this is the illicit bushmeat trading system. A group of the more wealthy consumers continue to purchase bushmeat, as it is considered a means of connecting to their ancestors and culture.¹⁵

Wildlife crime also impacts the economy. The economic profits gained through the business involving wildlife abuse negatively impacts their growth in various fields of sustainable economic development. In addition, businesses and enterprises that are primarily nature based (ie: tourism) see a decline. For instance, Namibia currently devotes around \$17 million annually to prevent large sums of investment into businesses related to illegal wildlife trade. If Namibia were to lose all their investments in this sector, the country would experience roughly a \$350 million loss over the next decade as a result of their unfortunate national dependence on this illicit field.¹⁶

Moreover, COVID-19 has played a part in the growth of wildlife crime. In response to the pandemic and social distancing restrictions, there was significantly less protection for animals and wildlife in conservation programs. Hence, there were little to no operations conducted nor measures set in

¹² "Role of Keystone Species in an Ecosystem | National Geographic Society." 2022. Nationalgeographic.org. 2022. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/role-keystone-species-ecosystem>.

¹³ Neme, Laurel. 2014. "For Rangers on the Front Lines of Anti-Poaching Wars, Daily Trauma." *Animals*. National Geographic. June 27, 2014.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/140627-congo-virunga-wildlife-rangers-elephants-rhinos-poaching>.

¹⁴ "Poaching Risks in Community-Based Natural Resource Management on JSTOR." 2013. Jstor.org. 2013. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23360345>.

¹⁵ Wyatt, Tanya. (2013). The Security Implications of the Illegal Wildlife Trade. *The Journal of Social Criminology*. Autumn. 130-158.

¹⁶ "The Economic Impact of Illegal Wildlife Trade in Southern Africa | Conservation Strategy Fund." 2022. Conservation-Strategy.org. June 20, 2022.

<https://www.conservation-strategy.org/project/economic-impact-illegal-wildlife-trade-southern-africa>.

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place for wildlife species, especially in the Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) where poaching is more prevalent. Furthermore, tourism reached record low numbers, and, therefore, poachers were able to work with more ease. Also, the demand for traditional medicine saw a rise, and while international air travel was heavily slowed down, the wildlife trafficking industry was still able to keep their businesses afloat and thus did not experience the steepest downfall.¹⁷

Looking into the history of wildlife crime and abuse, it originates back to the 18th century when the lower class and peasants at the time deemed poaching critical to their economic survival. In fact, because of the severe scarcity in food and supplies, there were groups that were dedicated to the protection of poachers' lives. However, later in the 1800s and to a larger extent in the late 1900s, there were certain restrictions set to the activity. Entering the late 20th and throughout the 21st century, restrictions weren't stringent enough and wildlife crime began to reach dangerous levels and meet a state of exigency.¹⁸

Thus, initiations, organizations, projects, etc. rose during the 20th and 21st century. For instance, INTERPOL has a team designated towards "Wildlife Enforcement," which has overseen a number of projects such as "Project Predator," "Project Wisdom," and "Operation Worthy II." These were all projects related to the arrest, stop, and seizure of wildlife crime by involving the police, intelligence agencies, and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).¹⁹

Another notable effort to solve the issue at hand involves the Member Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). These nations were able to come together in establishing a system that would allow the tracking of several smuggling groups and trafficking for ivory specifically. With this system in place, countries expanded their arrests and breakups of these groups.²⁰

Many NGOs are dedicated to solving this urgent issue. These organizations work in a variety of ways. Some are focused on the arrests of the traders, poachers, and businesses, and some are focused solely on the continued and increased care for vulnerable animal species. There is even a program held in Namibia noted as a "Community-Based Natural Resource Management," which focuses on the education of poachers on the adverse effects of poaching on both their communities and animal communities. This

¹⁷ Aniruddha Ghosal. 2021. "Coronavirus Lockdowns Increase Poaching in Asia, Africa." AP NEWS. Associated Press. April 20, 2021.

<https://apnews.com/article/india-ap-top-news-international-news-asia-virus-outbreak-9df0cc21045578ad86696bc05721c706>.

¹⁸ "Poaching | Description, History, Examples, & Control | Britannica." 2022. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/poaching-law>.

¹⁹ "Wildlife Crime." 2022. Interpol.int. 2022. <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Environmental-crime/Wildlife-crime>.

²⁰ "CITES." 2022. World Wildlife Fund. 2022. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/cites>.

is offered in consideration of poachers who were born into the career as a result of their economical and religious status.²¹

Definition of Key Terms

Poaching

Poaching refers to the hunting and killing of any form of wildlife—a violation of international law. Oftentimes, animals are the largest victims of poaching as they are sought for their value in, for instance, various traditional medicine making. Plants are also poached for their value as houseplants. There is a great commotion surrounding plant poaching as there is with animal poaching since it takes place on government land, ignoring the laws and regulations set in place.²²

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking

Illegal wildlife trafficking is the transporting, distributing, smuggling, capturing, and collecting of wildlife—a violation of international law. Poaching is considered a part of wildlife trafficking. This illicit activity most often takes place in the trade hubs spread out in Southeastern Asia, Africa, China, and Europe, and some are found in islands such as Indonesia and the Solomon Islands. The frequent motive for this are the high profit margins that are produced. For the rarer and more exotic species that are found, large sums are offered.²³

Wildlife Conservation

Wildlife conservation is the protection of the wildlife that is sought by the traffickers across the globe as well as the conservation of their habitats. There are NGOs involved in this practice for several reasons. Some of those include the sustainability of ecosystems, a continuation of a balance of wildlife populations as well as restoration. Wildlife conservation can take place in a wide range of methods. For instance, a zoo is one example but even eliminating certain harmful chemicals from being emitted (picking up trash/litter) are daily acts of wildlife conservation. Another widely known example of wildlife conservation is monitoring. Direct monitoring utilizes technology such as trail cameras whilst indirect monitoring relies on signs of life existence (ie: burrow counts, snow tracks). Wildlife conservation is essential to learn more on the status of a species and develop further effective monitoring methods.²⁴

²¹ “Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Namibia: A Case Study.” 2012. USAID. 2012. <https://rmpportal.net/library/content/community-based-natural-resource-management-in-namibia-a-case-study>.

²² “What Is Poaching? The Illegal Wildlife Trade Explained.” 2013. World Wildlife Fund. 2013. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-wildlife-trade>.

²³ Wildlife Trade 101. 2020. “Wildlife Trade 101.” NRDC. July 16, 2020. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/wildlife-trade-101>.

²⁴ “Wildlife Conservation | National Geographic Society.” 2022. Nationalgeographic.org. 2022. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/wildlife-conservation>.

Ivory Trade

Ivory trade has garnered a great amount of attention over the years for its animal cruelty methods which are involved and its commercial gains. The ivory tusks of animals such as the hippopotamus, mammoth, African elephant, Asian elephant, walrus, and narwhals are desired for their cultural value but also for their value in jewelry, piano keys, etc. They are sold at an extremely high price.²⁵ However, the means to gain these tusks are extremely cruel as the animals are illegally killed for them. To provide a statistic, around 20,000 elephants are killed annually for their ivory tusks. Samuel Wasser, the director of the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington, estimates the value of the international market for ivory to be near \$264 million.²⁶

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the range or variety of life that exists on the Earth. Oftentimes, biodiversity is divided into three classes: genetic, species, and ecosystem. Biodiversity is of utmost importance to maintain due to the fact that without it, there would be various issues such as soil fertilization, nutrient recycling, erosion control, pollination, and wastewater treatment. This would consequently lead to multiple problems for humans such as diminished food security, downfall of businesses, and a limitation of resources to fight diseases.²⁷ There is also a greatly negative impact on the wildlife considering there would be a decrease in the lifelines of species, discontinuance in evolutionary processes, and limited natural functions. Intertwining the issue at hand, wildlife crime and trafficking is one of the largest threats to biodiversity as it limits the processes which support life and the Earth.²⁸

Natural Resources

Natural resources are the essential materials that are provided and produced directly by the Earth which support the systems, processes, and needs of all wildlife. Some examples of natural resources include air, soil, sunlight, water, metals, natural gasses, coal, etc. These are put at risk when wildlife crime becomes involved as the processes to keep them available and preserve them are challenged since all

²⁵ “The History of the Ivory Trade | National Geographic Society.” 2012. Nationalgeographic.org. 2012.

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/history-ivory-trade>.

²⁶ Press, Associated. 2010. “African Elephants Imperiled by Ivory Trade in Asia.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times. May 19, 2010.

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/blogs/la-unleashed/story/2010-05-18/african-elephants-imperiled-by-ivory-trade-in-asia>.

²⁷ “What Is Biodiversity? Why Is It Important? | AMNH.” 2014. American Museum of Natural History. 2014.

[https://www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/what-is-biodiversity#:~:text=The%20term%20biodiversity%20\(from%20%E2%80%9Cbiological,cultural%20processes%20that%20sustain%20life..](https://www.amnh.org/research/center-for-biodiversity-conservation/what-is-biodiversity#:~:text=The%20term%20biodiversity%20(from%20%E2%80%9Cbiological,cultural%20processes%20that%20sustain%20life..)

²⁸ “Poaching | Saving Earth | Encyclopedia Britannica.” 2022. In *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/explore/savingearth/poaching>.

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forms of wildlife play a valuable role.²⁹ Furthermore, specific natural processes and chemical cycles see a disruption as a result of wildlife crimes.

Governance

Governance, as a whole, revolves around the act of conducting and enacting policies, rules, regulations, laws, etc. as a means to keep order. In terms of the issue of wildlife poaching, governance is an important aspect that is looked over and needs to be greatly improved on. Governance is greatly challenged and has been weakened due to the inadequate legislation, largely in part of the several corrupted members of government who are large stakeholders in the illegal trading systems.³⁰ Corruption is a large hindrance as it facilitates the supply and transit of wildlife as well as the resilience of criminal networks. Thus, policies and rules should become much more strict and binding. In addition, they should formulate more strategic frameworks regarding the exploitation and trafficking of wildlife.³¹

Criminal Network

Criminal networks are groups of members engaging in illegal activities that are tied together in order to successfully profit and gain in a certain illicit act. There are countless criminal networks that exist in organized poaching and in other forms of wildlife trafficking. Therefore, there are organizations that are in place to dismantle not individuals but their ring or network as a whole. In fact, scientists even have placed their input on dissolving them by presenting methods to find them with the DNA that they leave on the illegally sold ivory tusks of elephants.³²

Extinction

Extinction occurs when a certain species has completely died out as a whole. The causes of extinction include natural disasters but are most often human-led results such as overexploitation, hunting, climate change, etc. There are currently at least 15,000 species that are soon to be extinct and illegal wildlife crime is certainly not helping the situation at hand as they are known to continuously kill the rarer and exotic species on the list.³³ When species go extinct, they are removed from food chains, hence certain species will have to search for different food sources. This may damage other species populations,

²⁹ Kahler, Jessica & Roloff, Gary & Gore, Meredith. (2012). Poaching Risks in Community-Based Natural Resource Management. *Conservation biology : the journal of the Society for Conservation Biology*. 27.

³⁰ "Governance | WWF." 2022. Panda.org. 2022. https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/governance/.

³¹ *The Independent*. 2021. "Poachers, Corruption and Cash: Inside South Africa's New Rhino Crisis," June 18, 2021. <https://www.independent.co.uk/stop-the-illegal-wildlife-trade/south-africa-rhino-poaching-corruption-b1867674.html>.

³² ABC News. 2022. "Scientists Have Found a Way to Expose Poaching Criminal Networks Using DNA from Seized Elephant Tusks." ABC News. 2022. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/scientists-found-expose-poaching-criminal-networks-dna-seized/story?id=82877771>.

³³ "Extinction over Time." 2022. Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. 2022. <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/education/teaching-resources/paleontology/extinction-over-time>.

unbalancing ecosystems. In addition, extinction has its impact on humans as with reduced biodiversity, there is an increase in the susceptibility of infectious diseases, affecting humans' chances in survival.³⁴

Timeline of Key Events

April 26, 1723 - Black Act 1723

The Black Act 1723 was created by the Parliament of Great Britain following a continuous number of raids and maims of animals conducted by two poacher groups (the Blacks) in the Royal Park. The act states that anyone disguised or armed threatening wildlife could be handed a life sentence. Originally, the act started with the hunting or even wounding of deer to be illicit but later expanded to hunting of cattle, fishing, and deforestation in the, also expanded, list of areas noted in the act. Over 350 criminal sentences were handed down due to abuses of this act. This was the first substantial act that criminalized poaching and set a precedent for legislation regarding poaching for future years.³⁵

1900 - "Convention Designed to Ensure the Conservation of various species of wild animals in Africa, which are useful to Man or inoffensive" (British Parliamentary Papers)

The "Convention Designed to Ensure the Conservation of various species of wild animals in Africa, which are useful to Man or inoffensive" was signed in 1900 by the British Parliament after the issue of wildlife trade overseas became known as an eminent issue. Specifically this signing focused on the African species, most commonly the elephants. While this was the first treaty to extend to British actions overseas, there was little that resulted from this as there were no binding measures or any specifics on how the conservation would be followed through.³⁶

September 8, 1963 - International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) 8th General Assembly

The IUCN General Assembly took place in 1963 and the members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (founded at the London Convention in 1948) attended in order to establish a new treaty with improved and extended terms. During the 8th General Assembly which took place three years prior, a major concern which was raised multiple times throughout was that the countries were unaware of exporting and importing restrictions and regulations of other countries. In addition, the previous treaty or frameworks that they were involved in did not pertain to several species equally in need of protection.

³⁴ Marsh, Jane. 2021. "The Effects of Endangered Species." Environment Co. Environemnt.co. March 29, 2021. <https://environment.co/the-effects-of-endangered-species/#:~:text=As%20species%20go%20extinct%2C%20they,can%20proliferate%2C%20unbalancing%20local%20ecosystems..>

³⁵ McMahan, Mary. "What Was the Black Act?" 2022. Historical Index. July 8, 2022. <https://www.historicalindex.org/what-was-the-black-act.htm>.

³⁶ "The Evolving War on Illegal Wildlife Trade." 2020. International Institute for Sustainable Development. 2020. <https://www.iisd.org/articles/evolving-war-illegal-wildlife-trade>.

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Therefore, the treaty that came as a result of this tackled this issue and was a step in the positive direction in resolving this issue.³⁷

23 November, 2010 - International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC)

The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime was founded as an establishment working collectively with other renowned organizations including INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO). With the combined resources and power that these organizations hold, it was agreed that the establishment would hone in on building awareness, deeper analysis of criminal justice case results, and a thorough preparation as well as execution of dismantling wildlife trafficking criminal networks by working closely with law enforcement.³⁸

25 ~ 30 June, 2012 - Military seen poaching in Cameroon

Three Cameroon military men were caught poaching in Campo Ma'an. The three were caught by the WWF as well as the country's Ministry of Forestry. As they were caught and found it difficult to escape their predicament, they made efforts in bribing their conservator. Unfortunately for the men, it was not that simple and there were negotiations which had to be made. Thus, after honest confessions, weapons were discovered (6 modern ones and 264 snares) and with the information from the three caught, their relative network was also caught. A total of 6 poacher camps located in Southern Cameroon were brought down. This only demonstrated to the countries how parts of the government could also be colluded in this business, strengthening the urge and need to enact new laws and policies regarding the issue.³⁹

2013 - 16th CITES Conference of the Parties

The 16th CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) took place in Bangkok. While CITES is a treaty inclusive of both legal and illegal trading of wildlife, this conference focused on the illegal trading aspect. The conference took place on the premise that, at the time, illicit wildlife trading was fourth on the list amongst the largest illegal trading of sorts globally. Hence, members of the conference discussed the open possibility of initiating international trade bans on wildlife. While this was not implemented, at the end of the conference, it was unanimously

³⁷ Congress, IUCN. 2016. "IUCN Congress Milestone: Establishing CITES." IUCN World Conservation Congress. March 2016. <https://2016congress.iucn.org/news/20160301/news/iucn-congress-milestone-establishing-cites.html#:~:text=At%20the%208th%20IUCN,did%20not%20threaten%20their%20survival..>

³⁸ Nations, United. 2014. "A Global Collaboration to Fight Wildlife and Forest Crime | United Nations." United Nations. United Nations. 2014. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/global-collaboration-fight-wildlife-and-forest-crime>.

³⁹ Ramutsindela, Maano, Frank Matose, and Tafadzwa Mushonga. "The new turn in militarization of conservation in Cameroon, Central Africa." In *The Violence of Conservation in Africa: State, Militarization and Alternatives*, 98. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022.

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agreed for actions to be taken to account for the far-reaching impacts of the issue at hand on other fields such as economies.⁴⁰

2021 - Resurgence in poaching as a result of COVID-19

COVID-19 presented itself as not a barrier to the illegal wildlife crime and trafficking but rather as a catalyst. This was a result of decreased protection, tourism, and projects in motion to preserve wildlife. For instance, a total of 7.1 tonnes of pangolin and 870 kilograms of ivory were seized over a three separate period of times in Nigeria alone during 2021; 17 tigers which were discovered as wild animal pets illegally in houses and basements of Da Nang Vietnam; and scattered parts of 50 rhinoceros horns in the country of Malaysia. To look back at the statistics involving tigers in this certain issue at hand, a total of 200 tigers were seized internationally which is the largest number in comparison to the previous two years.⁴¹

Position of Key Member Nations and Other Bodies

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is known as the nation with the largest amount of poaching in the world. As a result, the life and existence of several rhino and elephant species are highly threatened in the nation, putting the tourism economy at risk as well.⁴² One of the major reasons why Zimbabwe has such high numbers in overfishing, poaching, and wildlife trade as a whole is due to their lack of fertile soil for agriculture. Hunting wildlife is their only alternative method for food and survival. Zimbabwe culture is put at risk as well due to the fact that the Shona people of Zimbabwe treasure their sacred relationships with animals. It is difficult for Zimbabwe to combat all of these issues by themselves, so the country receives help from the US through the Combating Wildlife Crime Project (CWCP) which provides aid in a variety of ways.⁴³

Kenya

Kenya directly follows Zimbabwe in the amount of poaching that occurs within the nation. Similar to Zimbabwe, the Kenya Wildlife Service has reported that tourism numbers have been seeing a decline. However, Kenya sees higher numbers in the number of workers within the field of animal

⁴⁰ "Report of Main Proceedings for 6 March 2013." 2021. IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin. 2021.

<https://enb.iisd.org/events/16th-meeting-cites-conference-parties-cop16/report-main-proceedings-6-march-2013>.

⁴¹ "The Pandemic Poachers: Covid-19 Threatens to Reverse Fragile Gains in Wildlife Conservation in East Africa - InfoNile." 2022. InfoNile. July 5, 2022. <https://infonile.org/en/wildlife-conservation/>.

⁴² "Poaching Numbers | Conservation | Save the Rhino International." 2022. Save the Rhino. March 16, 2022.

<https://www.savetherhino.org/rhino-info/poaching-stats/#:~:text=In%202015%2C%20both%20Zimbabwe%20and,than%20double%20the%20previous%20year.>

⁴³ "Environment | Zimbabwe | U.S. Agency for International Development." 2020. Usaid.gov. February 5, 2020. <https://www.usaid.gov/zimbabwe/environment>.

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protection putting their lives at risk. For instance, in one notable poaching event alone there were 3 rangers killed and two guards who were considerably injured. Therefore, Kenya has taken several measures to combat the present issues. One of them is working closely together with the two bordering nations: Tanzania and Uganda as wildlife trade is predominantly conducted along the borders. Furthermore, law enforcement bodies including INTERPOL and the Lusaka Agreement Task Force have been helping Kenya, a LEDC, in terms of handling prosecutions, arrests, and seizures. As a result of the help, around 1550 suspects were arrested in one year.⁴⁴

Botswana

1/3 of elephants of Africa are found in Botswana and hence the country claims to have been very proactive in finding the best policies and laws that will both accommodate the environment as well as the economy.⁴⁵ On the other hand, it was reported that there had been over 120 rhinos poached in Botswana over the time frame of 18 months and that there were specific rhino species on the verge of extinction. Botswana's government has refuted the claim but not on factually based ground. President Khama and his government have been extremely discreet about their statistics which they are bound to truthfully reveal by several treaties. Some conservationists have been outspoken in their belief that one of the reasons Botswana seems to have little improvement on this problem regards the rangers' denial to carry firearms.

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South Africa

South Africa has struggled immensely with wildlife crime and trafficking and 2014 was the year they reached their point of extremity in the number of rhinos involved in this illegal sector. Following 2014, the country has received both public, private, and military support. The support has mostly been put towards establishment of nature reserves and wildlife parks. However, this was more of a short-term solution rather than a long-term solution. The organized criminal networks recognized the increased level of security in these areas and the number of illegal wildlife crime decreased temporarily. The numbers saw a rise again when the networks began to target the less protected and funded reserves and parks.⁴⁷

United States of America

⁴⁴ Nations, United. 2014. "Fighting Wildlife Trade in Kenya | United Nations." United Nations. United Nations. 2014. <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/fighting-wildlife-trade-kenya>.

⁴⁵ Wise, Justin. 2019. "Botswana, Home to Nearly One-Third of Africa's Elephants, Lifts Hunting Ban." The Hill. The Hill. May 22, 2019.

<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/445080-botswana-home-to-nearly-one-third-of-africas-elephants-lifts/>.

⁴⁶ Zenda, Cyril. 2021. "Political Rivalries Flare in Botswana and Animals Pay the Price | FairPlanet." FairPlanet. 2021.

<https://www.fairplanet.org/story/political-rivalries-flare-in-botswana-and-animals-pay-the-price/>.

⁴⁷ News, BBC. 2015. "SA Rhino Poaching Record Set in 2014." BBC News. BBC News. January 22, 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-30934383>.

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The United States is also quite involved in the black market trade of wildlife. This illicit black market is known to be worth \$7 - \$23 billion each year. Therefore, the US has multi-agency efforts throughout the nation working on what is known as “Operation Crash” which infiltrates and takes down criminal networks. To provide an example of a result of this operation: United States vs Edward Levine - a man sentenced to prison for 27 months after planning to sell two ivory horns for a total of \$55,000.⁴⁸

While these operations continue within the country, the United States has also offered several of its resources and data to the other nations in need of them such as the aforementioned African countries. One of these initiatives is the Combating Wildlife Crime Project planned for five years. The focus is on increasing the knowledge and research on the trafficked animals as well as the sharing and transferring of data on the criminal acts between nations and their respective law enforcements.⁴⁹

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

The WWF is a non-governmental organization that was founded in 1961 with the purpose of limiting environmental dangers caused by human acts and desires as well as wildlife conservation as a whole. Currently, WWF has shared its impact in close to 100 countries. There are two main projects that the organization is devoted to: Thirty Hills and the Wildlife Crime Technology Project. The first one targets elephants, orangutans, and tigers as this project is focused on expanding their Sumatra rainforest habitat. The second aims to create and invent new technologies that will not only better track the cases of illegal wildlife activity but also prevent it from ever taking place first. One example of their technological inventions is the engineered cameras that can identify human movement near wildlife with their body heat.⁵⁰

Suggested Solutions

There are countless methods that can be initiated in order to mitigate wildlife trafficking as well as its short-term and long-term impacts. However, there should be a number of aspects that delegates must keep in mind when crafting their own resolutions. There are certain issues that are more pertinent to one country or one region. For instance, the continent of Africa sees a much larger issue with elephant poaching than in European countries. However, African countries are also LEDCs which mean that some of the initiatives that other Member Nations may form may not be suitable or conducive to their economy.

⁴⁸ “Two California Men Indicted for Selling Endangered Black Rhinoceros Horns.” 2014. Justice.gov. April 2, 2014. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/two-california-men-indicted-selling-endangered-black-rhinoceros-horns>.

⁴⁹ “‘Operation Crash’ and the Pelly Amendment | Save the Rhino.” 2014. Save the Rhino. July 10, 2014. <https://www.savetherhino.org/asia/vietnam/operation-crash-and-the-pelly-amendment/>.

⁵⁰ “Stop Wildlife Crime.” 2022. World Wildlife Fund. 2022. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/stop-wildlife-crime>.

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Hence, delegates must be cautious and realistic for the countries, their environments, and their economies as they all come with conflict of interests. The following solutions address key issues in regard to illegal wildlife trafficking, but delegates are highly encouraged to expand on these solutions and devise their own.

Firstly, there must be global understanding and unity when it comes to resolving international issues such as these with lasting negative implications. The most simple yet very effective way in founding this is with definition of key terms that all Member states can agree upon. For instance, the words “trafficking” and “animal health” may be taken with interpretation. In previous conferences and treaties, countries have acted on different levels of severity. Hence, in order to avoid this, all countries should be wary and take measures or fulfill their role in any binding treaties to a degree that can all be compromised upon.⁵¹

The initial steps on combating this issue have been completed through the establishment of organizations and treaties. The next step to be taken is the implementation of effective solutions. It is clear that the private sector plays a major role in this issue, as it has obvious economic motives to conserve wildlife. However, the group of industries that is regarded as often—considering the large impact that they have on the sphere of poaching and other illegal wildlife crime—is the extractive industry: those involved in logging, mining, etc. Due to the work done in these businesses, traffickers have been continuously gaining access to habitats which were previously not accessible.⁵² Hence, the companies of these industries should work together with organizations such as the WWF or the ICCWC to construct an improved set of policies and regulations to limit and hopefully completely terminate any implications of their work entangling with illegal wildlife crime.

There can also be solutions in the field of awareness and education that could be definitely further developed. Research and data has already displayed the most common demographics and ideas that the aforementioned campaigns can target.⁵³ These include falsifying the idea that medicinal value can be found in wildlife and that they are symbols of wealthy status. However, in addition to these campaigns and awareness methods that are directed towards the supply and demand of illicit activities as well as market control, there must also be those tailored towards the workers in other fields. For instance, rangers

⁵¹ Hub, Knowledge. 2014. “Policy Brief: International Wildlife Crime: An IISD Overview of Recent Events | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD.” Iisd.org. 2014.

<http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/international-wildlife-crime-an-iisd-overview-of-recent-events/>.

⁵² World Wide Fund for Nature, and Wildlife Conservation Society. *Assessing the potential threat of extractive industries to tropical intact forest landscapes*. 2018. Accessed July 23, 2022.

https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/wwf_wcs_ifl_report_2018_1.pdf.

⁵³ Wildlife Crime Program | IFAW. 2019. “Wildlife Crime Program | IFAW.” IFAW. 2019. <https://www.ifaw.org/international/programs/wildlife-crime>.

and the environmental police must be better informed on the tactics and ways of traffickers and be equally equipped with their own prevention methods. They should be trained to ward off and combat threats.

There could also be solutions that address international trade. With improved knowledge on the subject matter, those involved in logistics companies (shipping, airline, international transport) could develop a framework on potential penalizations of criminal networks for an abuse of the services that they are provided with. This could have several positive outcomes correlated to a decrease in the quantity of trade, increase in seizures, and it would act as a factor which could decrease the demand for wildlife trade.⁵⁴ Yet, this will be a feasible heightened method of enforcement only with education discussion and debate.

While this may come across as controversial and countries will most likely have differing opinions, there has been research conducted where the representatives of national governments and of multinational organizations have all seen not only the positive benefits but the need of the government to play a larger role. Especially with the vast number of criminal networks that were exposed at borders, there must be continued inspections and searches. The prosecution and conviction of any affiliated to the criminal networks must also be strengthened. There are examples that uphold this idea - take the National Inter Agency CITES Enforcement Collaboration Group (NICECG) in China. This group has successfully mobilized over 100,000 people related to any and all forms of wildlife crime. Their coordination and management was highly praised by several NGOs and countries as well.⁵⁵ Thus, Member Nations could enact a similar enforcement collaboration group that targets the particular issues related to wildlife crime that are most negatively impacting the environment, society, and the economy.

Lastly, there could be a number of conferences and databases which are shared and accessible. The conferences could compose detailed plans & enacted legislation and their positives and negatives. These would greatly help other countries on how to mitigate the issue within their borders. The shared database could be just another aspect for countries to decide whether or not some protocols are effective or ineffective.

Overall, improved and continuous resolutions are integral to nurturing a sustainable environment for all animal, plant, and human species. The environment is a key aspect that bonds countries together, taking into account the widespread implications that it has. In order to mitigate this specific issue at hand

⁵⁴ USAID, IUCN, and TRAFFIC. *Illegal Wildlife Trade: Leadership By The Transportation And Logistics Sector*. Accessed July 23, 2022. https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/8832/w_traps-transportation-discussion-document.pdf.

⁵⁵ "China Kicks off New Era of Inter-Agency Co-Operation on Wildlife Law Enforcement - Wildlife Trade News from TRAFFIC." 2012. Traffic.org. 2012. <https://www.traffic.org/news/china-kicks-off-new-era-of-inter-agency-co-operation-on-wildlife-law-enforcement/>.

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as best as possible, Member Nations should formulate structured ideas with the help of one another, the added strength of domestic efforts, and aid from NGOs in order to ensure that the UN Environmental Commission stands united in its efforts to continue preserving wildlife and biodiversity.

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