

~~END~~ WILDLIFE ~~CRIME~~



www.endwildlifecrime.org

Photographs by Paul Hilton / Earth Tree Images [No archive, no resale, 1 time use]. Further press materials, copywrite information and captions can be downloaded [here](#).

#ENDWILDLIFECRIME INITIATIVE AIMS TO END WILDLIFE CRIME – *FOR GOOD*.

Hong Kong, June 5 2020 - The economic, health and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic provide a stark reminder of the high risks associated with the under-regulated, poorly regulated and illegal trade in wildlife, a new international initiative to “End Wildlife Crime” announced today.

On 5th June **World Environment Day**, an alliance of environmental, policy, legal, business and public health experts urged the global community to address serious gaps in international law by:

- creating a new global agreement on wildlife crime, and
- making changes to existing international wildlife trade laws to include public and animal health considerations in decision making.

Transnational wildlife crime is a \$200 billion-a-year illegal industry but this figure pales in comparison to the costs to local communities, public and animal health and to our environment. Yet there currently is no global legal agreement on wildlife crime

“The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us, in a devastating way, of the interconnected nature of things, most particularly among economies, the environment, human and wildlife health and welfare”, said John Scanlon AO, former Secretary General of CITES and Chair of the #endwildlifecrime Initiative. “Our international laws, programmes and funds do not yet reflect this reality, which is also largely the case at the national level.”

Scanlon continued: “The current international system for regulating wildlife trade and combating wildlife crime is inadequate, and, left as it is, will not prevent the next pandemic.”

Will Travers OBE, co-founder and Executive President of the Born Free Foundation said that there is urgent need for transformative change before it is too late.

“More than a million wild species face extinction and the risk of another global pandemic cannot be ignored,” Travers said. “By bearing down on wildlife crime we can help slow, halt then reverse the decline in biodiversity. We

can also help to ensure that humanity never again has to suffer the devastating impacts on public health, livelihoods and social order that we are witnessing today.”

Chaired by Scanlon, hosted by ADM Capital Foundation in Hong Kong, and with Founding members the Born Free Foundation, The Food and Land Use Coalition, the Global Environmental Institute and The ICCF Group, the Initiative gathers an array of organisations and individuals in its Steering Group representing environmental, policy, business and public health interests. The initiative also includes advisers on private sector engagement and building partnerships, as well as a technical support group that includes renowned international lawyers and criminologists.

How will the Initiative take action?

The Initiative has come together to support the development and adoption of a wildlife crime protocol under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), and amendments to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the global agreement that regulates international wildlife trade, that would incorporate public and animal health criteria into its decision making.

These two inter-related reforms would bring new wildlife trade restrictions on public and animal health grounds, and bans on high-risk markets and consumption, alongside a cooperative global enforcement effort to end wildlife crime.

“We need new legal mechanisms to tackle the devastating impact these crimes have on local communities, country economies and global public health”, said Doug Flynn, SYSTEMIQ’s biodiversity lead, representing the Food and Land Use Coalition.

How does wildlife crime and trade endanger global health?

Scientific research indicates that the highly contagious coronavirus that causes COVID-19 was most likely transmitted to humans from its reservoir host, a horseshoe bat, via another intermediate host species, possibly a pangolin.

“We have ignored the warnings for years that wildlife markets are repositories for disease, yet the trade has continued with insufficient regulation”, said Lisa Genasci, CEO of the ADM Capital Foundation. “Sadly, it’s easier to maintain the *status quo* than act to protect global health.”

As COVID-19 cases climb into the millions, the global death toll creeps towards 400,000, and the health risks of wildlife trade and crime are better known, the time has clearly arrived for the international legal framework governing wildlife trade that dates to back to the 1970’s to be reformed, the Group said.

“It is essential that we address the dangers of commercial wildlife trade and commercial markets - especially as they lead to pandemics such as the one we are confronting at this moment - while respecting indigenous rights and sustainable means of wildlife utilization”, said David H. Barron, Chairman of The ICCF Group.

Don’t we already have laws on this?

The UN World Wildlife Crime Report found that wild species of animals and plants are bought and sold for meat, for traditional medicines, for furniture, as pets, and for other luxury or non-essential products, with the Report finding that 7,000 of the 36,000 species listed under CITES are in the illegal trade.

While CITES was established to ensure that the international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, it does not apply to domestic trade. CITES requires Parties to penalise rather than criminalise breaches, and it only applies to less than 0.5% of the world’s eight million species.

CITES does not include animal or public health criteria in its decision making. Taking a One Health approach to the wildlife trade is needed if we are to minimise the risks of disease spilling over from wild animal populations to humans again.

In his capacity as Chair of the Steering Group, Scanlon encouraged organisations from across all sectors, and interested individuals, to show their support by signing onto the initiative at www.endwildlifecrime.org.

“If we do not act boldly now to institutionalise the changes that are needed to laws, I fear we may find ourselves back in the same place in the not too distant future”, Scanlon said. “This Initiative puts forward reforms that can best position us to avert the next wildlife-related pandemic.”



Media Contacts:

John Scanlon AO, Former Secretary General of CITES
johns@africanparks.org

Sophie le Clue, ADM Capital Foundation
slc@admcf.org

Will Travers, Born Free
will@bornfree.org.uk

Douglas Flynn, The Food and Land Use Coalition
douglas.flynn@systemiq.earth

Further press materials, copywrite information and captions can be downloaded [here](#)