

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WILDLIFE CRIME

Industrial scale, organised, transnational wildlife crime is shifting thousands of tonnes of contraband, worth billions of dollars, and leaving death, destruction, and instability in its wake. Yet, remarkably, there is no global legal agreement on wildlife crime. By default, we have turned to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a trade-related conservation convention from the 1970's, to serve as the de facto legal instrument for combating serious wildlife crime. But CITES was not designed for this purpose; rather it was designed to regulate wildlife trade to avoid overexploitation of a species through international trade. It serves an important purpose in doing so, but it was not established and does not have the mandate to fight crime or the transnational organised criminal groups who are behind it. Of all the known threats to wildlife, illegal taking, trade and consumption is one of the most destructive and destabilising. We must finally grasp the nettle with wildlife crime, recognise the massive negative impacts it has on economies, ecosystems, public and animal health, security, and local communities, and embed combating it into the international criminal law framework.

WILDLIFE TRADE

Although the precise source of the Covid-19 pandemic has not yet been confirmed, the most likely explanation is that the virus, like [many others](#), jumped from animals, possibly a [raccoon dog](#), to humans at a wildlife market in China. Regardless, the links between wildlife and previous epidemics and pandemics such as HIV-AIDS, Ebola, MERS, SARS and more, are well established. Scientists and public health officials have long advised of the risk posed by wildlife-related zoonotic diseases, and recognised the conditions that make spillover from animals to humans more likely, including through certain high-risk trade, markets and consumption. International trade in wildlife is regulated by CITES, but the Convention does not address public health or animal health issues in its decision making; it only considers overexploitation of a species through international trade. This narrow view of wildlife trade cannot be sustained in a post COVID-19 world, one that is now acutely aware of the massive damage that zoonotic pandemics can do to economies and societies across every continent. The global call to take a 'One Health' approach to such issues to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment, must be heeded.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS INITIATIVE

The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime is an alliance of a diverse range of organisations and individuals who support its objectives. It is hosted by the ADM Capital Foundation, is overseen by a small steering group, has a technical support group and is supported by a network of International Champions to End Wildlife Crime.

The Initiative advocates and offers technical support for the following reforms to international laws:

- creating a new global agreement on wildlife crime; and
- including public health and animal health criteria in relevant international conventions and processes, including through the development and implementation of a robust Pandemic Instrument.*

These two objectives are being advanced by promoting and offering technical support towards the adoption of an additional Protocol to the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) on preventing and combating wildlife trafficking; and by engaging in the development of the Pandemic Instrument being negotiated under the World Health Organisation (WHO), advocating for such an instrument to incorporate a strong focus on primary prevention, the adoption of a One Health approach across all relevant activities, and specific obligations and a highly precautionary approach regarding any wildlife trade, markets and consumption that could pose a risk to human or animal health.

The two reforms, which are interrelated but not interdependent, would lead to better regulated wildlife trade on public and animal health grounds and bans on certain high-risk wildlife trade, markets and consumption, alongside a scaled up, cooperative global enforcement effort to combat wildlife crime.

*The initial preference of the Initiative was to amend CITES, given its well-established governance and permitting processes, and the impact it has on national legislation. It was, however, a big step for CITES to broaden its focus after 50 years, and it did not find favour with parties, as well as some observers, including over a concern that opening CITES for these amendments could open it to others. While the Initiative maintains this initial proposal on its webpage, and it did support the adoption of relevant decisions under CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), it is now fully focused on supporting the negotiation of a Pandemic Instrument under the World Health Organization (WHO), which, as a new instrument, may offer even greater scope for advancing a One Health approach to wildlife trade and markets.