END
WILDLIFE
CRIME

Vienna, 17 October 2024, UNTOC COP12 SIDE EVENT

WILDLIFE CRIME HAS DEVASTATING IMPACTS; HOW ENHANCED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION CAN HELP PREVENT AND COMBAT THESE SERIOUS CRIMES

EXPERT INTERVENTION FROM: Susan Lylis, Executive Vice President, ICCF Group

Thank you John. Ambassadors, Distinguished guests, esteemed delegates,

The International Conservation Caucus Foundation, or the ICCF Group, is proud to be a founding Steering Group member of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime. ICCF works with multiparty parliamentary conservation caucuses in 23 countries, supporting and empowering them to introduce legislation that advances conservation governance around the world.

As you mentioned John, the conversation within the UN on how to prevent and combat transnational wildlife trafficking was launched with the joint Presidential statement from Gabon and Costa Rica in 2021, in which they called for a new global agreement to prevent and combat wildlife trafficking, taking the form of an additional Protocol to the UNTOC convention. In their joint statement, the Presidents said that "given the scale of the risks to people and the planet, we simply cannot stand by and watch wildlife continue to disappear without strengthening our collective response, including international laws for combating and preventing wildlife crime."

Gabon and Costa Rica were later joined by the Presidents of Angola and Malawi. President Joao Lourenco announced Angola's commitment verbally at the ICCF US Congressional International Conservation Gala in Washington, DC in September of 2021.

His Excellency Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of Malawi, announced his commitment by stating that "wildlife crime is a highly-organized transnational phenomenon and no single country can successfully eradicate it on its own." All four presidents highlighted

the impacts of these crimes, which The World Bank has valued at between $1-2 trillion annually, as well as the loss of government revenue of up to $12 billion annually.

This critically important topic has achieved significant momentum and progress due to the strong leadership of States. This includes the adoption of the groundbreaking CCPCJ Resolution 31/1, where States were asked to provide their views on possible responses to address any gaps in the international legal framework.

The report published by UNODC in May of this year collected the views of 76 States and the European Union. It showed that more than half of respondents have a positive view of a potential additional Protocol to the UNTOC, with some States expressing a view that they would like to see the scope of a Protocol expanded to include other crimes that affect the environment.

In an effort to further support States, the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime conducted its own independent analysis of the rich content of the responses. This work was led by its host organization, the ADM Capital Foundation. I would like to briefly highlight some of the main findings.

From our analysis, we found that 89% of States stated they are either in favor of an additional Protocol to the UNTOC on illicit trafficking in wildlife, or are open to discussing it.

When it comes to the international legal framework, 72% of the States either explicitly noted gaps in the international legal framework, or recognized there were issues, or while suggesting there were no gaps, still described insufficiencies.

Several States also recognized the enforcement challenge posed by the exclusion of the vast majority of species of wild animals and plants from the current international wildlife trade controls provided by the convention known as CITES; which is something Juliana will highlight.

An additional protocol to the UNTOC could address this gap by including all nationally-protected and endemic species within the scope of a protocol, which could have a major beneficial impact, especially for source countries rich in biodiversity.

Some States said a new Protocol could present an opportunity to spotlight other crimes that affect the environment, such as illegal mining, land conversion, and the trafficking of waste.

Another most frequently highlighted issue was insufficient transnational cooperation, with a lack of provisions regarding mutual legal assistance (MLA), extraditions, joint investigations and special investigative techniques cited as examples.

The sharing of information was also emphasized as crucial. Some States said that so far - information sharing has proved to be unsatisfactory and that it needs to be enhanced to support more effective collaborative transboundary efforts to tackle wildlife trafficking.

89% of responding States highlighted the advantage of adopting standardized definitions, for example of wildlife trafficking, and a convergence of international agreements and national legislation regarding wildlife trafficking investigations and MLA procedures. This would more effectively strengthen enforcement efforts.

Some States also pointed out that triggering UNTOC provisions through a protocol will further standardize transnational penalization measures, sanctions, special investigative techniques, and definitions of terminology related to wildlife trafficking.

The majority of States acknowledged the potential advantages a new PROTOCOL could bring to the fight against wildlife trafficking. As was highlighted at the side event at the CCPCJ in May this year titled "Benefits of an Additional Protocol to the UNTOC: lessons learned from the existing Protocols", the UNTOC makes provision for, and anticipates, additional protocols.

Only through enhanced coordinated and collaborative efforts can we have an impact on a global scale. An additional protocol or protocols could serve as a powerful tool to strengthen international cooperation and national action.

For the past few years several States have spearheaded efforts to consider adopting an additional protocol to the UNTOC on preventing and combating wildlife trafficking, and they have made a powerful case for doing so. As I mentioned, in 2022 the CCPCJ adopted its historic Resolution 31/1, which elicited the views of many more States.

There is an opportunity at this UNTOC CoP to continue building on these concerted efforts to further advance inter-governmental consideration of this issue.

The draft UNTOC COP Resolution submitted by Brazil, Peru and France, which John and several others have referred to, provides a unique opportunity to build on this body of work, by creating an intergovernmental expert group that can consider the possible benefits of an additional protocol or protocols to the UNTOC on crimes that affect the environment, including wildlife crime.

ICCF hopes that the Parties to the UNTOC decide to move in this direction.

Wildlife Crime has Devastating Impacts; How Enhanced International Cooperation can help Prevent and Combat these Serious Crimes

Hosted by Brazil, and supported by Peru, Angola, Costa Rica, and 15 organisations, we will explore the devastating impacts of wildlife crime, including on biodiversity, climate change and human health. Join us for a discussion on the need to enhance international cooperation, and the possible strengthening of the international legal framework, to prevent and combat wildlife trafficking.

17 Oct 2024
2:00-2:50pm

Room CR7,
Vienna International Centre

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