

**Treating organized crime having an impact on the environment as a serious crime**

RECOGNISING that environmental crime covers illegal activities harming the environment and aimed at benefitting individuals, groups or companies, and may include illicit wildlife trafficking, illegal forest exploitation, illegal fishing, dumping and illicit trafficking of waste, including hazardous and toxic substances, and illegal mining and illicit trafficking of minerals, including precious metals and gemstones;

RECOGNISING that transnational organised crime having an impact on the environment, including wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and associated trade, and illegal mining and illicit trafficking of minerals, is among the most lucrative forms of crime in the world and, in addition to undermining development, harms biodiversity and natural environments, deprives local communities of important resources and the generation of legitimate income, and negatively affects public health, and in doing so threatens international security;

VERY CONCERNED by the close links between environmental crime and other types of illicit trafficking and crime, such as illicit firearms trafficking, drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering and obstruction of justice;

RECALLING United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolutions 55/25, 69/314, 70/1 and 71/13, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Resolutions Conf. 11.3 and Conf. 17.6, the Paris Declaration (2013), the London Declaration (2014), the Kasane Statement (2015), the G20 Leaders' Declaration (2017), the Declaration from the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (2018), as well as Targets 15.7 and 15.c of the Sustainable Development Goals, all of which recognise the urgent need to combat wildlife trafficking;

WELCOMING the measures taken to combat environmental crime by governments, the United Nations (in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)), CITES, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organisation, and other international and regional organisations, as well as the private sector and non-governmental organisations;

ALARMED that, despite these measures, environmental crime is becoming increasingly sophisticated and organised, is occurring on an unprecedented global scale, and continues to contribute to the destruction of nature and the decline of populations of numerous threatened species;

VERY CONCERNED about the lack of awareness among lawmakers and criminal justice professionals about these crimes, the lack of prioritisation of these crimes by law-enforcement authorities and across the penal chain, the inadequacy of domestic legislation, the weakness of criminal penalties, as well as the lack of adequate capacities, equipment and training available to effectively detect, prevent and combat environmental crime;

RECOGNISING that the rule of law is strengthened when witnesses to crimes are protected from retaliation when they provide information ('blow the whistle') to law enforcement and prosecutors;

NOTING WITH CONCERN that organised crime continues to flourish and expand to illicit trafficking in wildlife, timber, and other natural resources, because the risk of prosecution is frequently very low in comparison with the profits generated, and sentencing often does not reflect the seriousness of such crimes; and

FURTHER NOTING WITH CONCERN that some countries permit legal domestic trade in wildlife threatened by trade, including species in which international trade is prohibited, thereby risking the exacerbation of wildlife crime through perpetuating demand for such species, complicating law enforcement, undermining demand-reduction efforts, and providing opportunities to launder illegally-sourced specimens;

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URGES states to:

a. recognise environmental crimes as serious crimes within the scope of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) where the offence is transnational in nature and involves an organised criminal group;

b. fully and effectively implement their obligations under UNTOC and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), as well as commitments under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Bern Convention, the EU Environmental Crime Directive, the EU Birds Directive and other instruments, and to use more effectively the provisions of UNTOC and UNCAC to strengthen national capacities and cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in wildlife, timber, and minerals, as well as the corruption and money laundering associated with it, which can facilitate such crime;

c. adopt and implement, where necessary, national, regional and international legal standards providing for effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for individual offenders, accompanied by liability of legal persons for such crimes, civil compensation, and habitat restoration for environmental damage and victims;

d. enhance national law-enforcement capacities to conduct transnational investigations and operations to disrupt criminal networks engaged in trafficking wildlife, timber, and other environmental commodities worldwide;

e. reinforce the organisation of regulatory frameworks, in particular those related to corruption, money laundering, organised crime, illegal firearms trade, labour law, and terrorism, to recognise the links between trafficking in wildlife, timber, and minerals, and other forms of crime;

f. actively encourage, protect and otherwise support whistleblowers who are willing and able to provide information needed for prosecution of environmental crimes;

g. encourage, where appropriate and permitted by applicable law, the establishment, with adequate training and resourcing, of integrated national entities in charge of the fight against trafficking in wildlife, timber, and minerals, combining law-enforcement agencies, customs, environmental agencies, prosecutors and NGOs;

h. develop specialised research with sufficient means and capacities, and strengthen international cooperation in order to dismantle the criminal networks involved, through retracing the entire supply chain, by taking into account the corruption that facilitates the crossing of borders, and by investigating illicit financial flows;

i. strengthen the training and specialisation of law-enforcement and judicial authorities to reinforce their capacities to detect, investigate and prosecute environmental crime; and

j. actively support specialised international agencies to increase cooperation, to develop data and monitoring and to dismantle networks involved in the trafficking of wildlife, timber and minerals; and

2. REQUESTS members of the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime, IUCN, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), in close partnership with the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL), and all relevant United Nations entities and international and regional organisations, to enhance international inter-agency cooperation and coordination in supporting states in their efforts to prevent and combat environmental crimes, including by developing data and trend analysis relating to these crimes and by providing technical assistance and reinforcing capacities of states to effectively dismantle and prosecute criminal networks involved in environmental crimes.