

**Forum:** Environmental Committee  
**Issue:** Enhancing global efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species  
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**Position:** President

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## Introduction

Wildlife and animal parts are poached by dangerous worldwide networks in the same way that illegal drugs and weaponry are. It is nearly impossible to collect credible numbers for the value of the illegal wildlife trade due to its very nature.

Poaching elephants for ivory and tigers for their skins and bones are two well-known examples of illicit wildlife commerce.



**Figure 1:** National Geographic Social Campaign Takes Aim at Cheetah Cub Trafficking (National Geographics)

Not all wildlife trading is illegal. Tens of thousands of species of wild plants and animals are trapped or taken from the wild and then sold legally as food, pets, ornamental plants, leather, tourist souvenirs, and medicine. When an increasing share of wildlife commerce is illegal and unsustainable, it directly threatens the existence of many species in the wild.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Protected Species

Certain species are protected by law, meaning that it can be illegal to kill, injure, or capture birds or animals or to pick or damage certain wild plants.



Figure 2: Endangered Species in the Spotlight (National Geographics)

**Poaching**

Illegally hunt or catch (game or fish) on land that is not one's own or in contravention of official protection.  
(of an animal) Trample or cut up (turf) with its hoofs.

**Trafficking**

Deal or trade in something illegal.



Figure 3: Border Force staff at Heathrow hold up a tiger skin seized from traffickers (the Guardian)

**UN SDGs**

17 sustainable development goals proposed by the United Nations.



Figure 4: UN SDGs (the United Nations)

## Background

Despite the fact that threats to wildlife and plant species come from a variety of sources, including pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, and climate change, wildlife trafficking contributes significantly to the problem by poaching, harvesting, or depleting significant quantities of already endangered or at-risk species. Wildlife, animal parts, and plant trafficking have far-reaching consequences, not just for the species involved, but also for human livelihoods, biodiversity, and governance. Because of the diverse and significant implications of wildlife trafficking, the protection of wildlife, forests, and fish ‘must be part of a comprehensive approach to achieving poverty eradication, food security, and sustainable development, including the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, economic growth, social well-being, and sustainable livelihoods’ (UN General Assembly, 19 August 2015).

### Biodiversity loss

#### *Seriousness*

Biodiversity loss refers to the decline in the variety and abundance of species in a particular habitat or on a global scale. It is a complex issue influenced by various factors, including human activities, habitat destruction, pollution, climate change, and invasive species.

#### *Historical Background*

1. **Prehistoric Era:** The Earth has experienced several mass extinctions throughout its history, such as the Permian-Triassic extinction event, which wiped out around 96% of marine species. These extinctions were primarily caused by natural events like volcanic eruptions and asteroid impacts.
2. **Ancient and Medieval Times:** Human impacts on biodiversity were relatively limited during this period. However, human activities like hunting, deforestation, and land conversion for agriculture began to have localized effects on certain species and ecosystems.
3. **Age of Exploration (15th-18th centuries):** The expansion of European powers led to the colonization of new territories, resulting in the introduction of non-native species and the destruction of habitats. This period also witnessed the exploitation of natural resources, such as timber and wildlife, leading to the decline of many species.
4. **Industrial Revolution (18th-19th centuries):** The rapid industrialization and urbanization during this period brought about significant changes in land use, pollution levels, and resource extraction. These activities led to the destruction of habitats, pollution of air and water, and the decline of many species.
5. **Modern Era (20th century onwards):** The pace of biodiversity loss accelerated dramatically due to population growth, technological advancements, and increased consumption. Activities like deforestation, overfishing, pollution, habitat fragmentation, and climate change have had severe impacts on ecosystems and species worldwide.
6. **Conservation Efforts:** In response to the growing concern over biodiversity loss, conservation efforts gained momentum in the latter half of the 20th century. International agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) were established to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Despite these efforts, biodiversity loss continues to be a pressing issue. It is crucial to raise awareness, implement sustainable practices, protect habitats, and mitigate the factors contributing to biodiversity decline to ensure the preservation of Earth's rich biological heritage.

[https://www.unep.org/facts-about-nature-crisis?gclid=CjwKCAjw7oeqBhBwEiwALyHLM3bvd1fxaysTQcLSjvt9gH4DemVasBGH3ExiDBPcAfhDLjNQpcXY2RoCJaEQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unep.org/facts-about-nature-crisis?gclid=CjwKCAjw7oeqBhBwEiwALyHLM3bvd1fxaysTQcLSjvt9gH4DemVasBGH3ExiDBPcAfhDLjNQpcXY2RoCJaEQAvD_BwE)

## Conservation impact

### *Seriousness*

Animal trafficking poses a direct threat to many species, including endangered and critically endangered ones. The demand for exotic pets, traditional medicines, and luxury goods made from animal parts drives the illegal trade, leading to the depletion of populations and, in some cases, pushing species towards extinction.

### *Historical Background*

1. Colonial Era: During the colonial era, European powers engaged in the exploitation of natural resources and wildlife in their colonies. This led to the large-scale hunting and trade of animals for their skins, feathers, and other valuable parts. Many species, such as elephants, rhinos, and tigers, were heavily targeted, resulting in significant population declines.
2. 19th Century: The 19th century witnessed a surge in demand for exotic animals and their products, driven by the growing interest in natural history collections, zoos, and the fashion industry. This led to intensified hunting and trade, particularly in regions like Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The demand for ivory, feathers, furs, and live animals fueled the illegal trade and had severe conservation impacts.
3. Early 20th Century: The early 20th century saw the emergence of conservation movements and the recognition of the need to protect wildlife. Influential figures like Theodore Roosevelt and Carl Ethan Akeley played significant roles in raising awareness about the impacts of unregulated hunting and trade. Efforts were made to establish protected areas and regulate the trade of certain species.
4. Mid-20th Century: The mid-20th century marked a turning point in conservation efforts with the establishment of international agreements and organizations. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was formed in 1973 to regulate the international trade of endangered species and their products. This marked a significant step in addressing the conservation impact of animal trafficking.
5. Modern Era: In recent decades, the conservation impact of animal trafficking has gained increased attention. The illegal trade has become more organized, sophisticated, and lucrative, driven by factors such as demand for exotic pets, traditional medicines, and luxury goods. Conservation organizations, governments, and international bodies have intensified efforts to combat wildlife trafficking through law enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and community engagement.

## Economic impact

### *Seriousness*

Animal trafficking undermines legal and regulated industries, such as tourism, by diverting potential revenue away from legitimate activities. Countries with rich biodiversity and wildlife tourism potential may suffer economic losses as the decline in animal populations reduces the attractiveness of their natural assets.

### *Historical Background*

1. Colonial Era: During the colonial era, the demand for exotic animal products, such as furs, feathers, and ivory, fueled the illegal trade. This led to the depletion of animal populations and disrupted local economies that relied on the sustainable use of wildlife resources.
2. 19th Century: It created a lucrative market for animal trafficking, resulting in economic benefits for traders and suppliers. However, local communities often did not benefit from this trade, as the profits were concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or foreign entities.
3. Early 20th Century: In the early 20th century, the economic impacts of animal trafficking became more apparent. The overexploitation of wildlife resources led to declines in populations and loss of economic opportunities for local communities. This realization prompted the establishment of protected areas and regulations to control the trade of certain species, aiming to balance conservation and economic interests.
4. Mid-20th Century: The mid-20th century marked a shift in global attitudes towards conservation and sustainable resource use. International agreements and organizations, such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), were established to regulate the trade of endangered species and their products. These efforts aimed to protect wildlife while also recognizing the economic value of sustainable wildlife-based industries.
5. Modern Era: In recent decades, the economic impacts of animal trafficking have become more widely recognized. The illegal trade of animals generates significant profits for criminal networks, estimated to be worth billions of dollars annually. This illicit trade undermines legal industries, such as tourism and sustainable wildlife-based enterprises, leading to economic losses and missed opportunities for local communities.

### **Public health risks**

Animal trafficking poses significant public health risks due to various factors:

1. Zoonotic Diseases: Animals involved in trafficking may carry zoonotic diseases, which are infections that can be transmitted from animals to humans. Examples include Ebola, SARS, COVID-19, and various forms of influenza. When these infected animals are traded and come into close contact with humans, the risk of disease transmission increases.
2. Disease Amplification: Trafficked animals are often kept in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, which can facilitate the spread of diseases. Animals that are stressed, malnourished, or living in unhygienic environments are more susceptible to infections. These conditions allow pathogens to thrive and potentially mutate, increasing the risk of new infectious diseases emerging.
3. Illegal Wildlife Trade: Animal trafficking involves capturing and transporting wild animals, often across borders, without proper monitoring or documentation. This illegal trade bypasses health and safety regulations, making it difficult to detect and control potential disease outbreaks. It also

undermines efforts to track the origin of animals, hindering disease surveillance and control measures.

4. Ecological Disruption: Animal trafficking disrupts ecosystems by removing key species from their natural habitats. This disruption can lead to ecological imbalances, increasing the likelihood of disease transmission. For example, the trafficking of primates can impact the spread of diseases such as malaria, as these animals are natural hosts for the parasites that cause the disease.
5. Antibiotic Resistance: Animals involved in trafficking are often subjected to poor treatment and inadequate veterinary care. The overuse of antibiotics in this context can contribute to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. If these bacteria are transmitted to humans, it can lead to difficult-to-treat infections and pose a significant public health threat.

To mitigate these risks, it is crucial to strengthen international cooperation, enforce wildlife protection laws, improve animal welfare standards, and promote public awareness about the dangers associated with animal trafficking.

## Major Parties Involved (+NGOs)

### WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature)

“Working To Sustain The Natural World For The Benefit Of People And Nature.”

——WWF

WWF was established in 1961 by a group of passionate and committed individuals who sought to secure the funding necessary to protect places and species that were threatened by human development.

The WWF proposed the WCI (Wildlife Crime Initiative) to raise awareness about animal trafficking and poaching while also tracking criminals who poach animals.

Attached is the PDF link: [https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf\\_wildlifecrimebrochure\\_6\\_1\\_1\\_.pdf](https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_wildlifecrimebrochure_6_1_1_.pdf)

### UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)

A global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead program on terrorism.

UNODC recognizes the severeness of endangered species, ecological costs, animal cruelty, threats to other species, biosecurity risks, threats, and violence, depleting natural resources, and threatening livelihoods and governance and conflict.

In 2020, UNODC proposed World Wildlife Crime Report, including relevant policies like political will can be harnessed to generate action, addressing corruption is foundational to preventing wildlife crime, prosecutorial support and engagement are critical, inter-agency coordination on wildlife crime is necessary at the national level, international cooperation on criminal matters related to illegal wildlife trade can then support national efforts, research, data and monitoring require ongoing funding and improvements, addressing wildlife crime as it moves to the Internet, improving local community engagement and sustainable livelihoods, demand reduction is essential to preventing wildlife crime, addressing criminal exploitation of captive breeding facilities, strengthening supply chain integrity, preventing displacement, and preventing and addressing risks to human health like COVID-19.

Attached is the PDF link:

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World\\_Wildlife\\_Report\\_2020\\_9July.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/World_Wildlife_Report_2020_9July.pdf)

## UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

“UNEP is the leading environmental authority in the United Nations system. UNEP uses its expertise to strengthen environmental standards and practices while helping implement environmental obligations at the country, regional, and global levels. UNEP’s mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.”

——the United Nations

The IPBES Assessment Report on the Sustainable Use of Wild Species reveals that 1 in 5 people around the world rely on wild species for income and food, while 2.4 billion people depend on wood fuel for cooking.

“The IPBES report makes it abundantly clear that wild species are an indispensable source of food, shelter, and income for hundreds of millions around the world,” says Susan Gardner, Director of the Ecosystems Division at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

## UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization)

“The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations and the leading international organization in the field of tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. UNWTO’s mission is to promote and develop tourism as a significant means of fostering international peace and understanding, economic development, and international trade.”

——the United Nations

UNWTO serves the understanding that wildlife is our world heritage.

The UNWTO Report 'Towards Measuring the Economic Value of Wildlife Watching Tourism in Africa,' Wildlife tourism accounts for 7% of global tourism, with a 3% yearly growth rate. According to the same document, 14 African countries generate an estimated US\$142 million in entrance fees for protected areas.

## UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

UNDP works to eradicate poverty and reduce inequalities through the sustainable development of nations, in more than 170 countries and territories.

The National Institutes of Health believes that “all coronaviruses have a zoonotic origin, that is, they infect different species of animals, giving rise to a respiratory and intestinal infection.” UNDP further emphasizes COVID-19 is a public health emergency, as well as a massive and unprecedented assault on human behavioral norms, movement, the tourism sector, and all conservation initiatives that rely on it. Around the world, there have been allegations of increased poaching by populations who have lost their jobs and livelihoods. This raises the specter of wildlife infection by human pathogens and potential zoonotic pandemics such as COVID-19, which is transmitted from wildlife to humans.

## Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The United Nations (UN) has made various efforts to address animal trafficking and its associated public health risks. Here are some notable initiatives:

1. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): CITES is an international agreement aimed at protecting endangered species from

overexploitation. It regulates and monitors the international trade of wildlife, including live animals and their products. The UN supports the implementation of CITES to combat illegal wildlife trafficking, which contributes to public health risks. On 23 July 2021, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a Resolution on Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. This Resolution reaffirms and builds upon other Resolutions on this topic adopted by the UNGA in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2019.

2. World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborations: The WHO collaborates with various UN agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), to address the public health risks associated with animal trafficking. They work together to assess disease risks, strengthen surveillance systems, and promote international cooperation in managing zoonotic diseases.
3. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): The UNODC plays a crucial role in combating wildlife crime, including animal trafficking. They work with governments, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders to enhance legal frameworks, strengthen enforcement capacities, and raise awareness about the criminal aspects of wildlife trafficking.
4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The SDGs, adopted by the UN member states, include targets related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management, and public health. These goals aim to address the underlying drivers of animal trafficking, such as poverty, inequality, and unsustainable consumption patterns, to promote a more sustainable and healthy future.
5. Awareness and Education: The UN supports initiatives that raise awareness about the public health risks of animal trafficking. By educating the public, policymakers, and communities, the UN aims to foster a greater understanding of the importance of wildlife conservation and the potential health consequences associated with illegal wildlife trade.

While progress has been made, addressing animal trafficking and its public health risks remains a complex challenge. Continued collaboration between UN agencies, governments, civil society organizations, and individuals is essential to effectively combat this issue and protect human and animal health.

## Possible Solutions

Addressing animal trafficking requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders. Here are some possible solutions to resolve this issue:

1. Strengthening Legislation and Law Enforcement: Governments should enact and enforce strict laws against animal trafficking, providing appropriate penalties for offenders. This includes legislation that specifically targets wildlife crime and provides authorities with the necessary tools to investigate, prosecute, and deter traffickers. Adequate funding and resources should be allocated to law enforcement agencies to enhance their capacity to combat wildlife trafficking effectively.
2. International Cooperation and Coordination: Collaboration between countries is crucial to combat animal trafficking, as it often involves transnational criminal networks. Governments should work together through bilateral and multilateral agreements to share information, intelligence, and best practices, and coordinate efforts to tackle this issue effectively. Enhanced cooperation can lead to improved border controls, intelligence sharing, and joint enforcement operations.
3. Public Awareness and Education: Raising awareness among the public about the negative impacts of animal trafficking is essential. Educational campaigns can inform communities about the ecological, economic, and public health consequences of wildlife crime. By promoting ethical choices, responsible tourism, and the importance of biodiversity conservation, individuals can contribute to reducing the demand for trafficked animals and their products.
4. Community Engagement and Sustainable Livelihoods: Engaging local communities that live in or near wildlife habitats is crucial. Providing alternative livelihood options, such as sustainable



agriculture or eco-tourism, can help reduce the reliance on wildlife trafficking for income generation. Building partnerships with local communities and empowering them to actively participate in conservation efforts can foster a sense of ownership and pride in protecting their natural resources.

5. **Technology and Innovation:** The use of advanced technologies, such as drones, satellite imagery, and DNA analysis, can aid in monitoring and detecting wildlife trafficking activities. These tools can help identify trafficking routes, gather evidence, and assist in the identification of species. Additionally, the development of digital platforms and databases can improve information sharing, traceability, and transparency in the legal wildlife trade.
6. **Collaboration with Online Platforms:** Animal traffickers increasingly use online platforms to conduct their illicit activities. Collaborating with e-commerce platforms, social media companies, and online marketplaces is crucial to prevent the sale of trafficked animals and products. Implementing stricter policies, active monitoring, and reporting mechanisms can help identify and remove illegal listings.

It is important to recognize that resolving animal trafficking requires sustained effort, collaboration, and a comprehensive approach involving governments, international organizations, civil society, and individuals. By addressing the root causes, strengthening legislation, promoting awareness, and engaging local communities, we can work towards effectively combating this illegal trade and protecting both animal welfare and public health.

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