

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Sixty-sixth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 11-15 January 2016

Strategic matters

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS
ON TACKLING ILLICIT TRAFICKING IN WILDLIFE
AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. Goal 3 of the CITES Strategic Vision: 2008-2020 (the Strategic Vision) states:

*Contribute to significantly reducing the rate of biodiversity loss and **to achieving relevant globally-agreed goals and targets** by ensuring that CITES and other multilateral instruments and processes are coherent and mutually supportive (emphasis added).*

Resolution Conf. 16.3, adopting the Strategic Vision, states that the CITES Parties take into account, within the context of its mandate, *inter alia*: "contributing to the implementation of the relevant outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (2012)."

3. This year, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has adopted two important Resolutions that are highly relevant for the work of CITES authorities:
 - On 30 July 2015, it adopted UNGA [Resolution 69/314](#) on *Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife*; and
 - On 25 September 2015, it adopted UNGA [Resolution 70/1](#) on *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related targets.
4. The adoption of these Resolutions followed on from a number of key events and measures taken to combat illegal trade in wildlife at the national, regional and global levels, including the call made in the outcome document from the UN Convention on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want*,¹ for firm and strengthened action to be taken to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife on both the supply and demand sides, and the outcomes of the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP16),² amongst many other initiatives, which are referred to in the summary of these key events and measures prepared by the Secretariat in July 2015.³

UNGA Resolution 69/314

5. Concerned over the serious nature and the increasing scale of poaching and illegal trafficking in wildlife and its adverse economic, social and environmental impacts, and expressing particular concern over the

¹ <http://sd.iisd.org/guest-articles/cites-from-stockholm-in-%E2%80%9872-to-rio20-back-to-the-future/>

² <http://nr.iisd.org/guest-articles/cites-cop16-bangkok-2013-a-%E2%80%98watershed-moment%E2%80%99-for-combating-wildlife-crime/>

³ https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/news/pr/2015/IWT-events_2015.pdf

steady rise in the level of rhino poaching and alarmingly high levels of killings of elephants in Africa, the UNGA unanimously adopted a resolution on 'Tackling Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife' on 30 July 2015.⁴ The full text of the Resolution is available in the 6 official languages of the UN.

6. The 25-member UN Group of Friends on Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking established in New York in December 2013 and co-chaired by Gabon and Germany was instrumental in the preparation of the draft resolution. The two high level side events on poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking co-organized by Gabon and Germany in September 2013⁵ and September 2014⁶ in the margins of the UNGA helped pave the way for the adoption of this Resolution. The CITES Secretary-General made a presentation to the Group of Friends in 2014 and he served as the Moderator for the two high-level side events.
7. UNGA Resolution 69/314 makes reference to UNGA [Resolution 68/205](#) of 20 December 2013, in which it proclaimed 3 March, the day of the adoption of CITES, as World Wildlife Day and welcomed the international observance of the Day in 2014 and 2015 in order to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora, which also helped to pave the way for the adoption of Resolution 69/314.
8. The CITES Secretariat issued a media release on 30 July 2015 welcoming the adoption of the UNGA Resolution.⁷

Key elements of the UNGA Resolution 69/314

9. The Resolution expresses concern that illicit trafficking in protected species of wild fauna and flora is in some cases an increasingly sophisticated form of transnational organized crime that poses a threat to health and safety, security, good governance and the sustainable development of States.
10. The Resolution calls for firm and strengthened national measures, and an enhanced regional and global response. It is aimed at both supply and demand, including by strengthening the legislation necessary for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of offences, treating certain wildlife offences as a serious crime, providing for illegal wildlife trade offences to be treated as predicate offences (for anti-money laundering offences), supporting the exchange of evidence between States and taking steps to prohibit, prevent and counter any form of corruption that facilitates illicit trafficking in wildlife or wildlife products.
11. It urges States to reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products using targeted strategies to influence consumer behavior, emphasizes that the protection of wildlife must be part of a comprehensive approach to achieving, *inter alia*, sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods and encourages States to address sustainable and alternative livelihoods for affected communities to enable them to benefit from wildlife and wilderness.
12. The Resolution recognizes the legal framework provided by and the important role of CITES as an international agreement that stands at the intersection between trade, the environment and development⁸ and the importance of other biodiversity-related international conventions. It reaffirms the effectiveness of, and the legal framework provided by, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the UN Convention against Corruption, for international cooperation in fighting illicit trafficking in endangered species of wild flora and fauna. It also recognizes the important work of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) and its role in providing technical assistance to States in combating illicit trafficking in wildlife.
13. The Resolution also urges all CITES member States to take measures to ensure the full and effective implementation of their obligations under CITES, and further urges UN Member States that are not yet a Party to CITES to consider acceding to the Convention, as well as to acceding to the two UN Conventions against Transnational Organised Crime and Corruption.

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/news/pr/2015/N1522120-E.pdf>

⁵ https://cites.org/eng/news/sq/2013/20130926_unqa_sideevent_sum.php

⁶ https://cites.org/eng/unqa_side-event_26092014

⁷ https://cites.org/eng/unqa_resolution_wildlife_trafficking_150730

⁸ As was recognised in paragraph 203 of the outcome document adopted by the UN Convention on Sustainable Development, 'The Future We Want', which was reaffirmed in operative paragraph 1 of UNGA Resolution 69/314.

UNGA Resolution 70/1, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. On 25 September 2015 at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, the UNGA adopted a Resolution containing the new global SDGs “setting out a supremely ambitious and transformational agenda” to 2030 and a vision for the planet in which “humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected.”⁹
15. The CITES Secretariat issued a media release welcoming the SDGs on the day they were adopted,¹⁰ was part of a joint statement on the SDGs issued by the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions,¹¹ and co-authored a joint article with the Wildlife Conservation Society welcoming the SDGs, which was published in National Geographic Voices.¹²
16. The SDGs, which represent the agreed vision of the 193 Member States of the UN for the next 15 years, call for the protection of wild fauna and flora, as well as the ecosystems that they depend on. Among the 17 Goals and 169 targets, there are many that are of direct relevance to CITES.
17. The legal and sustainable use of wildlife will contribute to a number of the SDGs and targets, including Goal 1 on ending poverty, as well as Goals 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17, which specify that member States will, *inter alia*, conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development and protect, restore and promote sustainable use of ecosystems, sustainably manage forests and halt biodiversity loss.
18. The SDGs specifically address tackling illegal trade in wildlife through two specific Targets under Goal 15, which state:
 - 15.7 *Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products.*
 - 15.c *Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.*
19. The adoption of the SDGs, with specific targets on ending poaching and trafficking in wildlife, is a powerful expression of political determination to end these highly destructive crimes and is another major step forward in combating wildlife crime.
20. Many other Goals and targets set under SDGs are also of great relevance and significance in addressing illicit trafficking in wildlife, including Goal 1 to end poverty. Poverty and the lack of alternative livelihoods plays an important role in the poaching of and illegal illicit trafficking in wildlife, which can only be resolved through long term collective efforts. The CITES working group on livelihoods is seeking to address these issues.
21. The Governments of Gabon and Germany, the CITES Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Bank, in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and other civil society partners, held a High-level Event on Wildlife and Forest Crime at an evening reception at the WCS Central Park Zoo on 27 September 2015.¹³ The event was designed to create a high-level platform to reaffirm political commitments to respond to the challenges of wildlife and forest crime as called for by the SDGs and the recent UNGA on *Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife*. The Secretariat is grateful to all partners, including the WCS for generously hosting the event.
22. It would appear that the Strategic Vision as drafted is sufficiently wide to encompass the SDGs, insofar as they are relevant to the CITES mandate.

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit>

¹⁰ https://cites.org/eng/CITES_welcomes_UN_SDGs_with_target_to_end_poaching_trafficking_wildlife_25092015

¹¹ http://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/uploads/BLG_Statement_SD%20Summit_25-09-15_final.pdf

¹² <http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2015/09/25/the-new-sustainable-development-goals-a-vision-for-living-in-harmony-with-nature/>

¹³ https://cites.org/eng/un_system_and_intl_orgs_applaud_sust_dev_commitments_by_govs_to_battle_illegal_wildlife_trade_27092015

Recommendation

23. The Standing Committee is invited to note this report.