



Background Guide

**Economic and
Social Council**

1 | Tackling the illicit trade of wildlife

SDG: 1. No Poverty, 10. Reduced Inequality, 15. Life on Land

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Committee Introduction

The Economic and Social Council, or ECOSOC for short, is a committee that primarily focuses on economic issues, particularly in comparison to other committees. This means that in ECOSOC, debate can be on a large variety of topics with a focus on how economic aspects impact situations. This is highly important outside of MUN scenarios as distributing finances to effectively combat certain issues is of the utmost importance as finances are what can buy labor, tools, and new jobs in order to solve solutions. ECOSOC is highly important because it looks into many topics while also looking into real-world solutions in terms of economic aid.

The topic for the GECMUN XI ECOSOC this year is Tackling the Illicit Trade of Wildlife. First and foremost, there is a highly economical aspect in that when addressing issues of trade, and particularly why illegal trade happens. We want delegates to ask themselves: Why does illicit trade happen in the first place? The ECOSOC committee, as mentioned before, handles two main aspects of issues; economic and social. The economic facet here is that participants of illicit trade are trading wildlife as a means to make money. This has a highly financial side as the entirety of the topic is looking into the ways in which people work towards acquiring money. With that said, there is also a social side of the issue as well as many people participating in illicit trades are in a corrupt society in which are forced to partake in amoral solutions to make a livable wage. According to the Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security, people resort to this trade in order to combat poverty and food insecurity (Wildlife Trafficking: Why Battling This Illicit Trade Is Crucial). With that said, this is an incredibly problematic and short-term solution to a long-term issue, one of which needs to be addressed with pressing urgency.

The SDGs accompanying our topic this year are No Poverty, Reduced Inequality, and Life on Land. SDGs, or Sustainable Development Goals, are UN-oriented goals to work towards a more idyllic world. No poverty and reduced inequality are both critical as working to combat poverty, and thus reducing inequality of wealth distribution, also allows for a solution within the illicit trade of wildlife as people are less likely to resort to illicit trade to make a livable wage. Reduced inequality and life on land are both important focuses as they both highlight the importance of limiting the inequalities animals face while living on land when humans abuse the power dynamic of food chains and power between humans and animals, and helping animals when they are physically unable to help themselves.

Agenda Introduction

The illicit wildlife trade is a significant threat to many endangered species globally. This trade encompasses a wide range of activities, from poaching animals like elephants, rhinos, and pangolins to harvesting tropical timber unsustainably. Driven by high-profit margins and demand for rare species, particularly in Asia, the illegal wildlife trade is pushing many vulnerable species closer to extinction. Tropical timber is the most commonly traded wildlife commodity worldwide, with a substantial portion harvested and traded illegally. This issue has been discussed extensively by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As more endangered species are pushed to extinction due to this illegal trade, it is causing significant harm to global biodiversity and the environment. Regulating black markets that facilitate the majority of this trade is a huge challenge, as they often exist due to high regulations surrounding the hunting and sale of endangered wildlife. When governments impose tight controls and bans on the legal trade of endangered species, it creates a lucrative black market that criminal networks exploit to meet the persistent demand. As prices for these items skyrocket on the black market, the incentive for poaching and smuggling increases, further threatening vulnerable species.

While governments may have limited control over these markets, empowering wildlife conservation organizations to help protect vulnerable species could be an effective approach. Comprehensive strategies that address both the supply and demand sides of the wildlife trade, combined with stricter market regulations and targeted law enforcement, are necessary to combat this crisis and prevent further species loss. Strict regulations are necessary to protect endangered species, but the main challenge lies in striking the right balance between conservation and addressing the underlying drivers of the black market. Hence, it is extremely important to focus on demand reduction, improved traceability and strengthened international cooperation to disrupt these illicit transnational supply chains and safeguard our vulnerable wildlife.

Letter from the Chairs

Welcome to the Economic and Social Council for GECMUN XI! We are beyond excited to work with all of you and eventually meet you in March. We are here to review position papers within the next few months and to be your chairs for the upcoming conference. Position papers are an expectation for all delegates walking into GECMUN XI as they give necessary background and allow for delegates to have a full understanding of the topic before the debate, thus allowing for the most effective debate.

A position paper should include 3 sections: topic background, country stance, and proposed solutions. The topic background should include what the topic is and background information on the topic, as well as how your country relates to the topic. Country stance should include country policy on the illicit trade of wildlife, as well as what your country believes and what they have done to solve the issue. Proposed solutions can be solutions that have already been implemented in your country or another country as well as solutions that you have created to allow for a variety of possible solutions. Be sure to email your position paper to one of your chairs, see emails below.

Your 3 chairs for this conference will be Lyn Yoo, Ruby Farley, and Fannie Cheng. All 3 of us are currently attending the Taipei American School. Here are short introductions from all three of us:

My name is Lyn Yoo (25lynny@students.tas.tw), and I will be your Head Chair for this year's GECMUN XI. I am a senior this year, and I have been part of MUN since 5th grade but started as a delegate in 7th grade. I have joined a total of 15 conferences before this upcoming conference, but I have only just started to participate in conferences outside of Taiwan! MUN has challenged me to think outside of the box in tackling real-life problems, but it has also allowed me to step outside my comfort zone in socializing with new people. Critical thinking and communication are the keys to the most impactful MUN experiences. Although MUN has influenced a big part of my life and identity, I have a few other interests and passions that you should know! I am an artist, and my favorite medium would be digital or oil pastels (a weird combination). I love playing games that are socially known to be boring such as sudoku and solitaire, but I am pretty bad at both. I am not a sporty person at all as I could not do a mile run even if my life depended on it, but the only sport I really enjoy is swimming (No, I am not on our school's swim team). I am Korean; although I am not so great at my own mother tongue, I can speak Mandarin pretty well. I cannot wait to meet you all during the conference and to get to know all of you individually. See you at the conference!

My name is Ruby Farley (25rubyf@students.tas.tw), and I will be your Deputy Chair for the upcoming conference. I am a senior this year, and I have been doing MUN since I was in 6th grade, making MUN a part of both my middle school and high school experience. For me MUN has been an activity that has not only allowed me to open my understanding of a large

variety of topics but have also allowed me to get to know many people, such as Lyn and Fannie, both of whom I met through MUN! A few things to know about me: I love ceramics, I am a cross country runner, and that living in Taiwan for 2 years has allowed me to overcome a fear of bugs: shout out to the big spiders that show up, please get out of my room. I am excited to meet all of you soon!

My name is Fannie (26fanniec@students.tas.tw) and I will be your Associate Chair in GECMUN XI. I am a junior this year and I have been doing MUN since 7th grade. As much as I enjoy tackling social issues in a simulation setting, MUN also inspires me to make a bigger difference by applying MUN discussions to real-world solutions through clubs or other activities. Furthermore, I enjoy the “vibes” of MUN in which different perspectives and stances come together to debate and discuss new ideas. I find it exhilarating at times and MUN has truly allowed me to meet so many amazing people. Outside of MUN, I also play badminton and the oboe. I enjoy traveling (though I am not the “go with the flow” kind of traveler and NEED to have a basic itinerary planned), I love eating good food, and I admit that I’m materialistic and may or may not have a minor shopping problem. To start off, I want to give you guys a little prep tip that might help: when you go over party stances, be sure to recognize if your country supplies, assists in transit, consumes, or is a major trading hub in this trafficking ring. Also, wildlife includes all animals, plants, and fungi living in the wild so it’s not just poor innocent animals—it’s poor innocent plants and mushrooms too (lol)! Lastly, in MUN I go by 4 C’s: Confidence (speeches/taking initiatives), Communication (diplomacy/negotiation), Comprehension (understanding topic), and Connection (real-world/friends) to help guide me. I hope to see all of you grow individually through this conference and I promise to do my best to make this conference memorable for everyone!

As was already mentioned, our topic will be the illicit trade of wildlife and our SDGs will be No Poverty, Reduced Inequality, and Life on Land.

We are all looking forward to the conference! Do not hesitate to ask any of us questions on procedure, MUN, position papers, or anything that you don’t understand or want further explanations; We are all very experienced delegates and will be able to help clear up any confusion but we also understand what it was like to be a new delegate and we want for you to feel comfortable throughout the work leading to the conference as well as during debate.

Sincerely,

Lyn, Ruby, and Fannie

Key Terms

Illicit

Something, in this case the trade of wildlife, being illegally done. In this case, the trade happening with wildlife is not legal and goes against regulations but is still a method of trade and a means to make money, thus causing a more complex situation as legality is not enough to regulate this grotesque misuse of wildlife.

Poaching

Illegally taking and/or killing wildlife. For example, if there was a UN protected area for wildlife and a poacher (a hunter of which goes against laws protecting animals), despite the regulation against disturbing the wild animals, interferes with the wildlife, whether it is killing or taking an animal.

Wildlife

Wildlife refers to animals that are not domesticated and live their lives free of humans. This means that by interacting with wildlife in any way will cause a disturbance, in particular, forcible taking and trading these animals.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life within an ecosystem. Biodiversity can mean plants, animals, fungi, etc. but here will be focusing on animals. Biodiversity is heavily important for ecosystems as the more animals that go extinct or near extinct, the more the food chain will be impacted. This can be heavily problematic for ecosystems as with each animal that goes extinct, there is another animal that can also be at a risk of extinction. An example of this would be bees. Without bees, flowers would not be pollinated and without pollination, fruit may not be able to grow, affecting animals that eat fruit as a primary source of nutrition (Why Is Pollination Important).

Inequality

In, meaning the lack of, and equality meaning equally put together means the lack of equality. When talking about the rights of wildlife, the conversation focuses on the mistreatment of animals and the lack of equality that animals have when being allowed to live in nature when murdered or taken to be sold.

Conservation

Conservation here means the maintenance of animals. Conservation can look like ensuring that endangered animals do not go extinct as well as allowing for repopulation to happen. Conservation is highly important as a last resort. While conservation of animals is important, it is critical that poaching does not reach a point where species are so close to going extinct.

Extinction

When there are no more living animals of a particular species. Extinction means there is no chance of a species being able to repopulate, and thus limiting biodiversity and making a more strained food system. Poaching can be a large reason for extinction.

Endangered

The step before extinction. This is when there are few animals of a certain species left and thus there is a high need for conservation to ensure that an animal will not be gone forever. Endangerment also makes animals seem more 'valuable' and thus make these animals more heavily searched and killed.

Black Market

The Black Market is an illegal 'market' which does not get overseen by governments. Illicit trade of wildlife can happen often undetected and thus can go through. The Black Market makes it more accessible for poachers and buyers to sell and buy illegally killed animals.

Poverty

When a person is unable to make a livable amount of money. Poverty can lead people to take colossal measures to make enough money to survive. Poverty is a large part of the problem within the illegal trade of wildlife as it is a means to make large sums of money in a relatively quick way.

Regulation

Creating laws or rules as a way to control what is happening. Regulation is highly important to protect wildlife, with that being said, there is still *illicit* trade happening. This means that the regulation may not be strong enough or might not be focusing on the correct issues.

Rehabilitation

In the case of wild animals, rehabilitation is the process that allows for wildlife animals that have previously been displaced or orphaned to receive the aid they need to survive. Some examples of rehabilitation would be directly caring for these animals for whatever injury they may have or even arranging suitable environments for their release and livelihood.

Historical Background

Spanning over one thousand years ago, during the era of the Silk Road, poaching was highly rewarded and valued. The roots of wildlife trafficking can be traced back to the ancient Silk Road trade networks that connected China, Central Asia, and the West. Not only did it facilitate the exchange of silk, but also other valuable goods like spices, exotic flora, animals, animal products, and animal-based traditional medicines. Caravans traveling the Silk Road would transport across vast distances, laying the foundations for early wildlife trade. Certain high-value wildlife such as horses or products like ivory from the tusks of elephants, rhino horns, and exotic animal skins were prized commodities that were trafficked along the Silk Road trade routes. Over the centuries, the illegal wildlife trade grew in scale and sophistication. Attracted by high profits and relatively low risks compared to other illicit trades, organized criminal networks became heavily involved. New technologies and smuggling methods also enabled poachers and traffickers to access, transport, and sell wildlife internationally. For example, during colonial expansion into Africa and Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries, the illicit wildlife trade saw significant expansion. Africa and Asia provided new sources of exotic wildlife and opened up new markets for these products in the West. The fur trade in North America was often through illicit methods. Furs sought after by Europeans due to fashion trends and their representation of status and luxury became an economic engine to countries such as the French, British, and Dutch, providing income for settlers, merchants, and the colonial government.

During the Middle Ages, poaching in royal forests and private lands was a serious offense, often met with severe punishment. Landowners and nobility employed methods such as man traps to capture or injure trespassers engaged in illegal hunting. The use of man traps or other brutal punishments waned as attitudes towards humane treatment and legal reform evolved with a greater focus on proportionate and just enforcement of laws. The German and British colonial administrations enacted some of the first wildlife protection laws, but these were primarily aimed at preserving game for elite hunting rather than true conservation.

Current State of Affairs

Based on the third edition of UNODC's World Wildlife Crime Reports, wildlife trafficking remains a significant global issue, affecting over 4,000 species of animals and plants (World Wildlife Crime Report). Around 3,250 of these species are listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Between 2015 and 2021, law enforcement agencies confiscated over 13 million items totaling more than 16,000 tonnes (Despite Two Decades of Concerted Action). Though there have been positive signs in reducing trafficking impacts in the last two decades, the scale of illegal wildlife remains substantial, requiring greater efforts. Currently, wildlife crime is largely interconnected with organized crime group activities being highly concentrated in the world's most diverse and fragile environments such as the Amazon and the Golden Triangle. The Wildlife Crime Report explains that crime groups are involved in various aspects along the trade route, including export, import, brokering, storage, keeping, breeding, or handling interactions with processors. Corruption plays a key role as wildlife crime cases are rarely prosecuted. Often a pre-planned, systemic part of organized crime in wildlife trafficking, corrupt officials could aid poachers in facilitating poaching or ensuring the ease of contraband moving through customs, while traffickers could also use bribery to obtain false documents to legitimize the trade under CITES, a permit system that regulates the trade of certain species (The Link between Corruption).

As technology becomes more advanced, it causes an increased amount of traffickers to reach global markets, escalating the situation of illicit trade and endangerment of wildlife. This becomes relevant in discussions related to how technology advancements can be utilized to end these harmful markets instead of providing help and efficiency (Leading Tech Companies Unite). Traffickers, in terms of wildlife trafficking, mainly use technology like the Internet to create global connectivity enabling the selling and buying of wildlife products. This kind of trading even maintains the anonymity of sellers, allowing them to continue sustaining this market. Many large and leading technology companies are connected to stop this problem of wildlife trafficking through Internet systems, however, the issue still persists with other forms of technology possibly allowing the efficient flow of the market.

Stances of Parties

United States of America

The United States takes a robust stance against wildlife trafficking, recognizing it as a significant global issue that undermines conservation efforts, fuels corruption, and threatens public health and safety (Wildlife and Timber Trafficking). The U.S. launched the National Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking in 2014, focusing on three main objectives: strengthening enforcement, reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, and expanding international cooperation. Furthermore, the President's Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking that is co-chaired by the State Department coordinates efforts among 17 federal agencies.

South Korea

The Republic of Korea has taken significant steps to address wildlife trafficking, particularly focusing on the illegal trade of big cats and other endangered species (Law Viewer). The country's approach has evolved over the years, transitioning from being a major market for wildlife products to implementing strict regulations and bans. Once one of the largest importers of tiger bone, the country has largely eliminated large-scale trade, attributed to effective enforcement of trade bans and changing public attitudes towards wildlife consumption (Animal Protection Index). The country's geographical isolation as a peninsula and strong enforcement of bans have helped mitigate the illegal trade, but it remains essential to monitor and address any emerging threats.

China

Being one of the largest markets for illegal wildlife products, The People's Republic of China has taken significant steps in recent years to combat wildlife trafficking, adopting a zero-tolerance stance against this illicit trade. China's approach involves a combination of stricter legislation, enhanced enforcement, international cooperation, and demand reduction efforts. China has revised its Wildlife Protection Law (WPL) to close loopholes and impose harsher penalties on wildlife traffickers. China has also collaborated with global e-commerce companies since 2007 to make online marketplaces unavailable for wildlife trade (Combat Wildlife Crime).

Russia

The Russian Federation is a country well known for fur skin goods. With that said, these fur products are largely obtained through the illicit trade of wildlife. Trade of animals has become more organized, with permits from CITE being given out, making the primary limits of the animal products being the lack of human labor and cost. CITE has allowed for the obtaining of fur products as a 'trophy' accessible and available for foreigners and Russian citizens alike. Rare birds and bird eggs found in Russia also fall victim to the loose regulations surrounding poaching and trade. Notably, eider birds have been commonly imported to other

countries and forced into captivity. The Russian Federation is not only not making strides against the illicit trade of animals but is even making it more and more accessible.

New Zealand

New Zealand is known for its diverse wildlife, yet most of the unique species their land holds are endangered. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), 94% of reptiles, 82% of birds, 80% of bats, 76% of freshwater fish, 22% of marine mammals, and 46% of vascular plants are heavily endangered and facing threats of extinction in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Brazil

Brazil is a significant source and transit country for wildlife trafficking, particularly for species like jaguars and birds. Brazil is home to the largest biodiversity on the planet, with approximately 50,313 plant species and 125,251 animal species identified. The Atlantic Forest and the Amazon Rainforest are two of the most biodiverse regions. The Amazon rainforest's biodiversity is severely threatened by poaching and illegal trade. Brazil supports UN initiatives to strengthen legislation against wildlife trafficking and has been involved in regional cooperation efforts to combat this issue. However, enforcement remains a challenge due to corruption and inadequate resources. Brazil has faced criticism for its approach to environmental protection, particularly under previous administrations that prioritized economic development over conservation. This has led to increased deforestation and habitat loss, exacerbating wildlife trafficking issues. The vast and dense Amazon provides cover for poachers and traffickers. Its remote areas make it difficult for authorities to monitor and enforce laws against wildlife trafficking.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria is a transit point for illegal wildlife trade, particularly for birds and reptiles trafficked to Western Europe. Bulgaria's position as a gateway between Europe and Asia makes it a transit point for trafficked wildlife. Bulgaria has diverse ecosystems, including mountains, forests, and wetlands, hosting numerous endemic species. Geographic diversity makes it challenging for authorities to monitor all potential trafficking routes effectively. The country supports EU regulations that align with UN efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. Despite these efforts, Bulgaria faces challenges in enforcement due to corruption and a lack of resources, which hinders its ability to combat wildlife crime effectively. Reports have indicated that illegal bird trapping continues unabated due to insufficient penalties and a lack of political will to address the issue. This has led to Bulgaria being viewed as a weak link in the EU's efforts against wildlife trafficking.

Columbia

Colombia is both a source and transit country for trafficked wildlife, including exotic birds and reptiles. Colombia ranks as one of the most biodiverse countries globally, with a wide variety of ecosystems ranging from Amazon rainforest to Andean mountains. These regions are rich in biodiversity but also difficult to patrol due to their rugged terrain. The

Colombian government has implemented measures to strengthen laws against wildlife trafficking and has cooperated with international organizations. However, ongoing issues with armed groups complicate enforcement efforts, making the country vulnerable to organized crime. Some groups are involved in poaching as a means of funding their activities, leading to a paradox where conservation efforts are undermined by violence. The government's focus on peace negotiations sometimes overshadows wildlife protection efforts, allowing poaching to continue unchecked in certain regions controlled by these groups.

Ecuador

Ecuador is known for its rich biodiversity, especially in the Amazon rainforest and Galápagos Islands. This makes them a target for wildlife trafficking, especially for species like tortoises and birds. There exist remote and isolated areas that make it easier for traffickers to operate without detection. The government has enacted laws to protect endangered species and participates in international agreements. However, enforcement is often hampered by limited resources and corruption within local authorities. Ecuador's government has been criticized for prioritizing economic development over environmental conservation, particularly in areas like oil extraction and mining that threaten biodiversity. The expansion of oil drilling in the Amazon has led to habitat destruction, making it easier for traffickers to exploit vulnerable species like tortoises and birds.

Egypt

Egypt serves as a transit point for trafficked wildlife from Africa to Europe and Asia. Egypt has unique biodiversity primarily in its deserts and along the Nile River, though it faces significant threats from urbanization. The government supports UN initiatives aimed at combating wildlife trafficking but faces challenges related to enforcement and corruption. The illegal trade threatens local biodiversity, including endangered species such as the Egyptian tortoise.

France

France is a destination country for illegally trafficked wildlife products, including ivory and exotic pets. France boasts diverse ecosystems across its mainland and overseas territories, hosting numerous endemic species. The French government actively supports UN resolutions against wildlife trafficking and has implemented strict laws to combat the issue. France also engages in international cooperation to enhance enforcement against trafficking networks.

India

India is both a source and destination for illegal wildlife trade, particularly for tigers, elephants, and rhinos. India is rich in biodiversity with varied ecosystems ranging from Himalayan mountains to tropical forests. The country has strong legal frameworks in place but struggles with enforcement due to corruption and resource limitations. India actively participates in international efforts led by the UN to combat wildlife trafficking. India faces a

dual challenge of protecting its rich biodiversity while managing human-wildlife conflict. Some believe that economic pressures lead to compromises on conservation efforts.

Indonesia

Indonesia is a major source of trafficked wildlife, including orangutans and various reptiles. Indonesia is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, with thousands of unique species found across its many islands. The government has made commitments to combat illegal trade through national laws and international agreements but faces significant challenges from organized crime networks that exploit weak governance structures. Additionally, Indonesia's many islands complicate law enforcement efforts against wildlife trafficking.

Mexico

Mexico has diverse ecosystems ranging from deserts to rainforests, hosting numerous endemic species. Mexico is a source country for various trafficked species, including reptiles and birds. Mexico's location facilitates cross-border trafficking routes for wildlife products, especially with the US and Central America. The government has taken steps to strengthen its legal framework against wildlife trafficking but continues to face challenges related to corruption and enforcement capacity.

Mozambique

Mozambique has a rich biodiversity, particularly in its national parks and coastal areas. Mozambique is heavily affected by wildlife trafficking, particularly concerning elephants and rhinos due to poaching driven by demand for ivory. The government supports regional initiatives against wildlife crime but struggles with enforcement due to limited resources and corruption.

Singapore

Singapore has a limited natural biodiversity but is home to unique flora and fauna within its parks and reserves. Hence, Singapore serves as a major transit hub for illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia. The government has enacted strict laws against wildlife trafficking and actively collaborates with international organizations in support of UN initiatives. However, the high demand for exotic pets poses ongoing challenges.

South Africa

South Africa has diverse ecosystems including savannas, forests, and deserts teeming with unique wildlife. This makes South Africa a critical battleground against wildlife trafficking, especially concerning rhino poaching driven by the demand for horn products. The South African government supports robust legal frameworks aligned with UN resolutions but faces significant challenges from organized crime syndicates involved in poaching.

Spain

Spain acts as both a transit point and destination for illegally trafficked wildlife products, including reptiles and birds. The Spanish government supports EU regulations aligned with UN initiatives but faces challenges in enforcement due to corruption within some law enforcement agencies. Spain is recognized as one of the most biodiverse countries in Europe, encompassing four biogeographical regions: Atlantic, Alpine, Mediterranean, and Macaronesian. The country boasts a rich variety of ecosystems, including forests, wetlands, mountains, and coastlines.

Thailand

Thailand is both a source and transit country for illegal wildlife trade involving elephants, tigers, and various reptiles. High demand for traditional medicine fuels poaching activities targeting endangered species like tigers. The Thai government has made commitments to combat this issue through national laws that align with UN efforts but struggles with enforcement due to corruption at various levels. Thailand is home to diverse ecosystems ranging from tropical rainforests to mountainous regions. It has a rich array of flora and fauna due to its geographical diversity.

United Arab Emirates

The UAE is known as a significant transit hub between Africa and Asia for illegal wildlife trade, particularly involving exotic pets. The UAE has limited biodiversity but hosts unique desert ecosystems along with coastal marine life. The government actively supports international efforts against trafficking through strict laws but faces challenges related to enforcement in some areas. Despite having strict laws against wildlife trafficking, reports indicate ongoing issues with smuggling networks operating through UAE airports. Critics argue that more needs to be done at the regulatory level to close loopholes exploited by traffickers.

United Kingdom

The UK has diverse ecosystems including woodlands, moors, and coastal areas that support various wildlife populations. The UK is both a destination country for illegally trafficked products like ivory and a participant in international efforts against wildlife crime. The UK government supports UN initiatives aimed at enhancing legal frameworks but faces challenges related to online sales of illegal products.

Vietnam

Vietnam features rich biodiversity across its forests, mountains, and coastal regions but faces significant threats from development pressures. Vietnam is a major consumer market for illegal wildlife products, including rhino horn and pangolin scales. The Vietnamese government has made commitments to combat this issue through national laws aligned with UN resolutions but struggles with enforcement due to widespread corruption.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe faces significant challenges from poaching driven by demand for ivory and rhino horn. Zimbabwe features diverse ecosystems including savannas, forests, and wetlands that support a wide range of wildlife. The government supports regional cooperation efforts against wildlife trafficking but struggles with effective law enforcement due to resource limitations. Zimbabwe's approach towards conservation can be contentious due to debates around land use policies that prioritize agriculture over natural habitats, impacting local biodiversity negatively.

Canada

Canada plays an active role in combating wildlife trafficking through its legal frameworks that align with international standards set by the UN. However, it also serves as a destination market for some illegally trafficked species, necessitating ongoing vigilance in enforcement efforts. Canada boasts diverse ecosystems ranging from boreal forests to tundra regions supporting various native species. Because of Canada's diverse ecosystems, they have specific regulations to prevent illegal logging within their vast forests. Over 90% of Canada's forests are publicly owned, with provinces and territories overseeing sustainable management through laws, policies, and monitoring. Forestry enterprises must comply with government regulations and international agreements like CITES. Canada has over 180 tree species, with only 35 of them being harvested for commercial purposes because of their abundance. Thus, the Canadian government has imposed regulations and forest management plans that restrict their illegal harvest.

Australia

Renowned for its unique biodiversity, featuring ecosystems such as rainforests, deserts, and coral reefs that host numerous endemic species, Australia has implemented strict laws against wildlife trafficking and actively participates in international agreements aimed at protecting endangered species. While the country has made progress in enforcement, it still faces challenges related to the illegal pet trade.

Turkey

Turkey serves as both a transit point for trafficked species from Africa into Europe as well as a consumer market for certain illegal products. Turkey's diverse geography includes mountains, forests, wetlands, and coastal areas that support a wide range of plant and animal species. The Turkish government supports international efforts against wildlife trafficking but faces challenges related to corruption within law enforcement agencies.

Qatar

Qatar recognizes the importance of combating wildlife trafficking as part of its commitment to environmental sustainability but faces challenges related to enforcement capacity. Qatar plays an emerging role within regional markets concerning illicit trading activities although recent initiatives have been launched aimed at addressing these issues through enhanced cooperation among Gulf states. Qatar's arid climate limits its biodiversity

mainly concentrated around coastal areas where marine life thrives alongside some desert flora/fauna adaptations present throughout its territory. Endangered animals found within Qatar's waters include Dugongs (Dugong dugon) which are threatened mainly through habitat degradation caused by development projects along coastlines.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is involved in regional efforts against wildlife trafficking but struggles with limited resources for effective law enforcement despite supporting UN resolutions aimed at combating this issue. Kyrgyzstan's mountainous terrain supports unique flora/fauna adapted specifically towards high-altitude environments alongside several endemic plant varieties found throughout alpine regions. Kyrgyzstan struggles with issues related towards illegal hunting practices targeting local wildlife; however recent collaborations aimed at strengthening conservation efforts have been initiated through partnerships involving NGOs and governmental entities alike.

Congo

The Congo Basin represents one of Earth's last great wilderness areas hosting immense biodiversity including vast tropical forests teeming with life ranging from primates down towards countless insect varieties present within this ecosystem's confines. Congo is heavily affected by poaching driven by demand for ivory and bushmeat. The Congolese government supports international cooperation efforts against wildlife trafficking but faces significant challenges from armed groups involved in poaching activities.

Possible Solutions

Stronger scientific research

While observing the current state of wildlife trafficking, a lot of the efforts to reduce this issue comes from better scientific research on the matter. Research being done on the best possible ways to care for the displaced and endangered animals in need of hospitality will allow for better understanding in the scientific community but also allow for these animals to heal in a necessary way. Innovative methods and technologies are also being developed to enhance detection and protection efforts.

Stronger Border Control

Oftentimes, when poaching or trafficking animals the intention is to smuggle it to another country where an animal may be worth more. So, to discourage this behavior, strengthening border control may allow for a decrease in wildlife trafficking. Not only will it allow for the direct catching of traffickers but it will also deter those who may attempt to smuggle as it will be a higher risk. Implementing advanced surveillance technologies, such as drones and digital monitoring systems, can help authorities detect suspicious activities at borders and in protected areas. This includes hotspot policing strategies that focus resources on areas with high poaching activity. Strengthening international agreements and collaborations can enhance border control effectiveness. Countries need to share intelligence and best practices to combat transnational wildlife trafficking networks.

Raise awareness

While a basic solution, it is effective. People care, and a lot of the time want to help but don't know how. Raising awareness can mean volunteers to aid in animal rehabilitation, more donations, and also just more understanding of why this is a problem and how people can work to not encourage traffickers. Informing the public about the consequences of wildlife trafficking can lead to more responsible consumer behavior. Campaigns should focus on the ecological impacts of illegal trade as well as the ethical considerations surrounding animal welfare

Solving underlying issues

It is also important to address long-term issues, and solve any underlying problems that contribute to the repetitive cycle. Many communities engage in poaching due to economic necessity. Providing sustainable livelihood options can reduce reliance on illegal activities. Programs that promote eco-tourism or sustainable agriculture can offer viable alternatives. Strengthening laws against wildlife trafficking and ensuring strict penalties for offenders can act as a deterrent. Advocacy for policy changes at both national and international levels is necessary to create a robust legal framework against wildlife crimes.

Questions to Consider

1. Why might people be led to poach or take advantage of the illicit trade of wildlife?
 - a. It is important to consider motive when looking into a problem, whenever solving a problem, finding the root is critical to preventing or slowing the problem in the future.
 - b. What are some economical and social reasonings for this; relation to poverty rates, job opportunities, etc.
 - c. What are reasons unrelated to poverty that might drive people to commit these crimes - this can be more dangerous as increase in education, job opportunities, or other tools for a better economy, might not be enough to solve this problem.
2. What is a motivator that might make people move away from resorting to the trade of wildlife?
 - a. Working towards having people not want to purchase animals is critical as the less these animals are purchased, the less likely people are to violate the animals in the first place as the reward may not be enough.
 - b. What would be enough to sway people from the trade - more education on ethics? More education in general? Other job opportunities?
 - c. How can these possible motivators be attained? Is it realistic to set it in place?
3. What can More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) do to aid in the solution?
 - a. In this conversation, MEDCs have a critical role as much of the illicit trade is being sold to animals in MEDCs. Because of this, MEDCs have a role to play in preventing the furtherance of this trade.
 - b. What incentives are there to have these countries help? Trade in resources? How can these incentives be ethically mindful - trading wildlife for another violation of an SDG is not necessarily a viable option.
 - c. What can they do to demotivate their own citizens in partaking in this trade? How can it be implemented in a way that is more effective than already set laws to regulate the selling and purchasing of illegally traded animals?
4. What can Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) do to aid the solution?
 - a. While MEDCs have a lot of sway in economic matters, the LEDCs also have a responsibility in ensuring that this trade is not as accessible to begin with.
 - b. What laws or punishments can be set in place as a result of this trade? How can this be set in place ethically and without violating other SDGs?
 - c. How are they able to financially partake in the dismantling of the illicit trade networks?

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