FORUM: General Assembly

ISSUE: Addressing the Issue of Illegal International Wildlife Trade

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ABSTRACT

Wildlife crime is one of the most detrimental atrocities within our natural world. It harms the environments and habitats of people and animals alike. However, it is rarely talked about. Illegal wildlife trade has been an important source of income for various criminal organizations and corrupt leadership, while simultaneously being a heavy hitter for local economies within developing nations. Taking animals from their natural habitat can greatly impede the quality of life and even the population rate of that species. Member states must take action against this atrocity through collaborative safeguards, training, and equipping for local, national, and international law enforcement agencies.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Ecological Security

This term refers to the notion that wildlife crime, biodiversity loss, and climate change are security issues.

Exotic Pet

Any non-domesticated, wild animal kept as a pet.

Illegal Wildlife Trade

The illegal buying, selling, and trading of animals and their parts (i.e., skins, horns, or bones)

The UK Ivory Act

A law passed in the UK in 2018 that made the general trade of ivory items illegal. If found guilty of breaching this Act, one could face fines of £250,000 or up to five years in prison. This law was later extended to include the trade of ivory items from other animals (i.e., hippos, orcas, narwhals)

Poaching

The illegal hunting or capture of animals that are not your own with the intent to introduce them into the illegal live animal trade or to kill them.

Rangers

A person who protects the environment from wildlife crime. They are experts within their ecosystems who are equipped to provide the best care and protection.

Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC)

A campaign, initiative, project, or mission with the core goal of addressing the root causes of wildlife trade.

Trafficking Hubs

Places in which illegal animals and their parts pass on their way to the customer. They are not necessarily the same location as the animal's place of origin.

Wildlife Confiscation

Stopping wildlife trafficking through the interception of traffickers and liberating any animals or parts in their possession.

Wildlife Crime

Any illegal activities in relation to poaching, breeding, hunting, trading, and trapping wild animals.

Wildlife Cybercrime

Any illegal activities in relation to wildlife crime (including but not limited to: trading and killing) that are done with the use of the internet and social media.

Wildlife Products

Any product that is derived from animals. They may be legal in certain cases (i.e., sheep's wool)

Wildlife Trafficking

All crimes that involve the illegal trade, smuggling, poaching, capture, or collection of animals that are protected by law.

BACKGROUND

Historically, hunting and/or trading animals and their parts have been a part of many traditions across multiple cultures. However, due to globalization and the advancement of modern technologies, this culture has been exploited to an extent far beyond a sustainable degree. Wildlife crime has now become a transnational criminal enterprise. Wildlife

cybercrime allows buyers and vendors to negotiate trades anonymously through encrypted platforms. The first international response to this situation was demonstrated through the CITES. While CITES provided a categorical framework of species classification, the rise in sales shifted the international bodies' opinion on wildlife trade to criminal offenses. This led to the creation of the ICCWC, an intergovernmental organization that strengthens member states' enforcement and legal responses within the context of wildlife crime.

IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

1. **Habitat Destruction**

The methods used to conduct wildlife crime are often damaging. Examples could be illegal logging, cyanide fishing, and dynamite fishing.

2. **Population Declination**

The illegal wildlife trade market is often based on endangered species like elephants, rhinos, or tigers. These actions just push them further to the brink of extinction.

3. **Disease and Pandemic Risks**

The animals are trafficked and are often shoved into crammed spaces with no care for sanitation. These spaces become breeding grounds for pathogens and dangerous diseases.

4. **Organized Crime and Corruption**

Illegal wildlife trade is often controlled by international criminal organizations. This trade creates massive amounts of revenue that funds these illegal organizations and their proxies (i.e., militias, insurgencies, corrupt local leaders)

5. **Local Economic Loss**

The loss of biodiversity leads to the decrease of nature-based tourism, which is the livelihood of many communities within developing nations.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

European Union

- Funds the GUARD (Global United Action to Reduce and Dismantle Wildlife Crime) Wildlife Project. This project aims to reduce international wildlife and forest product trafficking

The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

- A partnership of five intergovernmental organizations with specialized mandates that impose interventions within criminal justice systems as well as law enforcement to equip them with the capacity to address wildlife crime

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

- An agreement drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 on a meeting in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) that aims to ensure the wildlife trade is legal and sustainable, so that it does not hurt the survival of a certain species.

Germany

- Has been a leading figure in organizing international conferences to combat poaching and other wildlife crimes since 2014. Worked with the UN in 2015 in advocacy for a multilateral process to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking.

United States

- Created a Presidential Task Force that coordinates and implements strategies in an effort to combat international criminal organizations, protect endangered species, and hold traffickers accountable.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

1. **Trade Restrictions**

Encourage member states to prohibit commercial trade of animal parts of endangered species.

2. **Border Security**

Equip border and customs authorities at airports, seaports, and land borders with advanced mechanisms to quickly identify species.

3. **Tech Partnerships**

Encourage UN committees and entities to partner with tech companies to implement web-based safeguards or algorithms to remove illegal listing sites and report vendors to their respective national law enforcement.

4. **Advocacy of SBCC**

Create SBCC campaigns and initiatives within nations that have a greater consumer population to help reduce the market demand for exotic pets and medicines.

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