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Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/311](#) on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. The report provides an overview of the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade, contains information on the implementation of resolution [75/311](#) since its adoption in July 2021 and also contains proposals for possible future action.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 75/311 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, taking into account Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/40, to report to the Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade, taking into account the trends regarding illicit wildlife trafficking as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, and on the implementation of its resolution 75/311, and to make proposals for possible future action.
2. The international community has recognized the worrying scale and scope of trafficking in wildlife and the need for international cooperation in tackling it. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 69/314, 70/301, 71/326, 73/343 and 75/311, expressed concern about the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of poaching and wildlife trafficking and encouraged Member States to take action to counter such phenomena. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/25, expressed its strong conviction that the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which it adopted in that resolution, would constitute an effective tool and the necessary legal framework for international cooperation in combating trafficking in, inter alia, endangered species of wild fauna and flora.
3. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 2003/27, 2008/25, 2011/36 and 2013/40, and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in its resolutions 16/1, 23/1 and 28/3, also called for international cooperation and crime prevention and criminal justice responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife.
4. The United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its resolutions 1/3 and 2/14, recognized the adverse economic, social and environmental impact of the illegal trade in wildlife and strongly encouraged Member States to take measures to combat it.
5. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all Member States are called on to take action towards sustainable development. With regard to tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, several targets are interrelated and particularly important. Target 15.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals is to take urgent action to end poaching of and trafficking in protected species of flora and fauna and to address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products. Target 15.c is to enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching of and trafficking in protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities. Target 16.3 is to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
6. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework includes several targets relevant to tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, including in relation to human–wildlife interactions (part of target 4 of the Framework); the use, harvesting and trade of wild species in a sustainable, safe and legal manner (target 5); and the sustainable management and use of wild species (target 9).
7. The present report is based on information shared by Member States, United Nations entities and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime. The Consortium is a collaborative effort of five intergovernmental organizations, namely the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

II. Global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade

8. Wildlife crime is a global phenomenon, manifesting itself in many hundreds of independent illicit markets. Despite the fact that only a small share of the more than

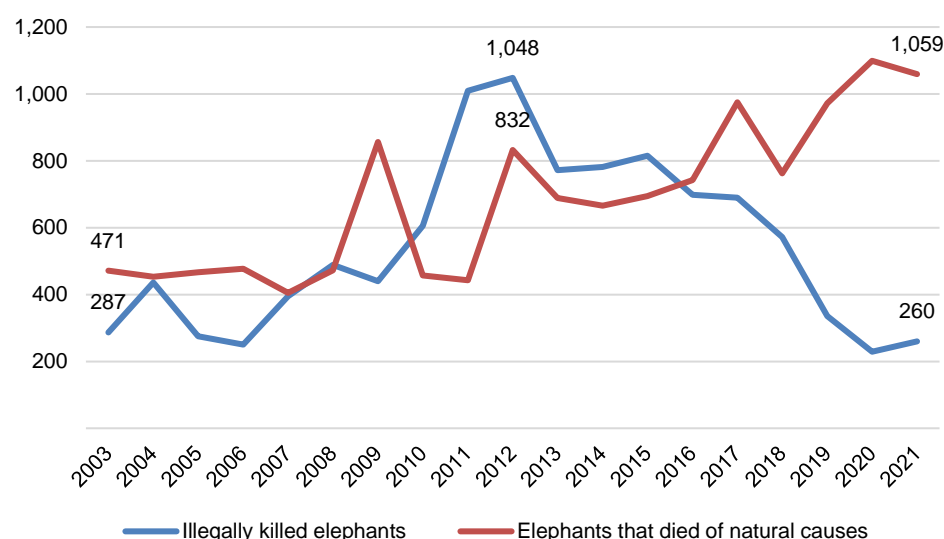
30,000 internationally regulated species are subject to widespread illegal trade, monitoring the phenomenon as a whole is extremely challenging. As certain illicit markets decline, others are expanding, and for all those markets there is a shortage of reliable data. In this section, two of the best-known illicit markets are considered, namely those of African elephant ivory and African rhinoceros horn, in order to provide insight into current market dynamics.

African elephant ivory

9. The size of the African elephant population¹ has not been evaluated since 2016.² All evidence appears to indicate a general decline in elephant poaching over the last decade, although some have disputed how far that recent trend extends geographically.³ The secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora monitors the poaching of elephants through its Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme, which operates in 69 designated sites that together hold more than 50 per cent of the African elephant population, thus constituting a substantial sample (see figure I). When rangers in those participating wildlife areas discover an elephant carcass, they determine whether it was illegally killed (poached) or died of another cause. In 2012, of the 1,880 elephant carcasses discovered, 1,048 of them had been illegally killed and 832 had died of natural causes. In 2021, of the 1,319 carcasses discovered, only 260 had been illegally killed, among the lowest annual totals since the programme began in 2003.

Figure I

Number of illegally killed elephants and elephants that died of natural causes detected by the patrols of the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme, 2003–2021



Source: Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, document CoP19 Doc. 66.5.)

¹ Asian elephants are also under threat but the populations are much smaller and there are therefore far fewer reported illegal killings: in 2021, only 21 illegally killed Asian elephants were reported to the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants programme of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

² C.R. Thouless and others, *African Elephant Status Report 2016: An Update from the African Elephant Database*, Occasional Paper Series of the International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission, No. 60 (Gland, Switzerland, 2016).

³ Scott Schlossberg and others, "State-space models reveal a continuing elephant poaching problem in most of Africa", *Nature Research Scientific Reports*, vol. 10, art. No. 10166, 2020.

10. The declining trend in poaching has been accompanied by a decline in ivory seizures and prices. The ivory seizures recorded through the Elephant Trade Information System of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora show a downward trend from 2012 to 2019. In the first half of 2019, three of the largest ever ivory seizures were made, totalling more than 25 tons. If not for those three seizures, which may have come from pre-existing stocks rather than recent poaching,⁴ the declining trend would have continued in 2019. In 2020, in some respects an anomalous year owing to COVID-19-related restrictions, one of the lowest ever seizure totals was recorded.⁵ Data from 2021 show that the amount of ivory seized, by weight, remained low, with 2020 and 2021 having the lowest recorded seizures since 2008, which was in the period when the current poaching crisis began.⁶

11. Data on prices from several sources show a similar declining trend that began in 2014, which was the year when the highest prices ever were reached.⁷ The combination of declines in poaching, ivory seizures and prices appears to support the picture of a market in overall decline. The decline may be related to significant policy changes taken by key Member States to restrict the legal sale of ivory and to the effects of the national action plan process under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

African rhinoceros horn⁸

12. Compared with elephant populations, the whereabouts and conditions of the less numerous rhinoceros populations are well known. There were an estimated 22,137 rhinoceros in Africa in 2021, about two thirds of which were in South Africa. According to the latest estimates, the number of rhinoceros in Africa declined from 23,562 in 2017 to 22,137 in 2021, at a rate of just over 1 per cent per year on average. This is despite the fact that, following the rapid rise in poaching that began in 2007 the number of rhinoceros poached declined from approximately 1,300 in 2015 to approximately 500 in 2021 (see figure II).⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have further contributed to the ongoing decline in wildlife trafficking, and as a result the decline from 2019 to 2020 was particularly steep. The slight increase in 2021 is still in keeping with an overall downward trend if the number for 2020, an anomalous year, is disregarded. The number of rhinoceros poached has not yet returned to the levels that existed before the crisis level of poaching of the past decade.

⁴ See *World Wildlife Crime Report 2020: Trafficking in Protected Species* (United Nations publication, 2020).

⁵ Although ivory seizures were at an all-time low in 2020, not all contraband flows showed a similar reduction. Global cocaine seizures, for example, were at an all-time high. See *World Drug Report 2022*.

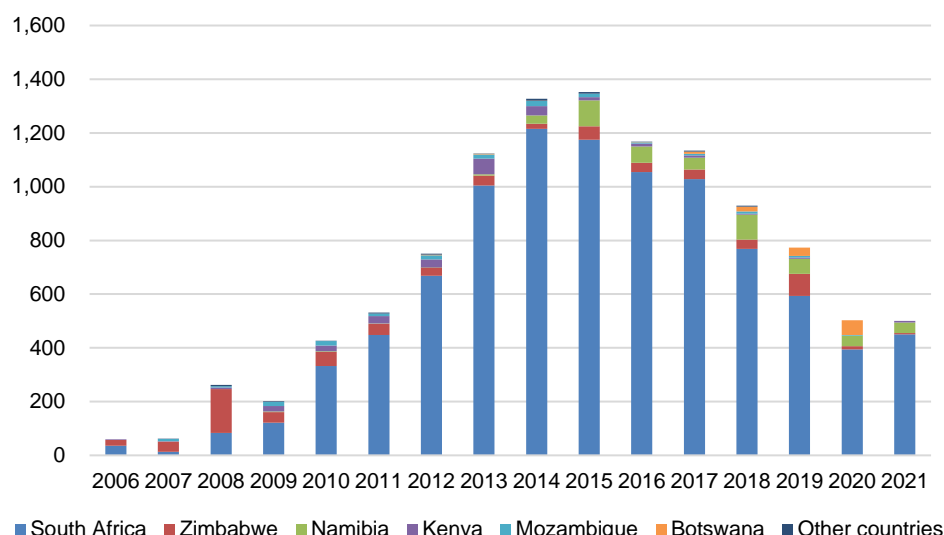
⁶ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, document CoP19 Inf.3.

⁷ *World Wildlife Crime Report 2020*.

⁸ Asian rhinoceros are also under threat, but their numbers are much smaller and relatedly fewer reported killings. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, between 2019 and 2021, the poaching of 11 Asian rhinos was detected.

⁹ Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, document CoP19 Doc.75 (Rev. 1).

Figure II
Number of rhinoceros poached, by year and country, 2006–2021



Source: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

13. The Wildlife Justice Commission has been tracking wholesale rhinoceros horn prices in Viet Nam since 2016 and the data show a consistent decline in prices, from about \$22,000 per kg in 2016 to about \$11,000 per kg in 2020.¹⁰ According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, between 575 and 923 rhinoceros horns entered illegal commerce each year between 2018 and 2020.¹¹ Using the price in Viet Nam in 2021, this suggests an annual illicit wholesale market in the range of \$15 million to \$25 million.

Mixed trends

14. Although the declining trend in trafficking of African elephant ivory and African rhinoceros horn are encouraging, they are not representative of illicit wildlife markets as a whole. Seizures of pangolins and rosewood, for example, should cause significant concern for the survival of those species. UNODC will continue to monitor those markets and highlight areas for concern.

III. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/311

15. In its resolution 75/311, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the implementation of that resolution. The present section was produced on the basis of responses from Member States to a questionnaire in a note verbale sent by the secretariat on 28 November 2022.¹² In total, 48 Member States answered the questionnaire, with the responses coming from a range of ministries and national authorities, including wildlife management authorities, forestry management authorities, authorities designated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, customs, police and prosecution

¹⁰ Wildlife Justice Commission, *Rhino Horn Trafficking as a Form of Transnational Organised Crime, 2012–2021* (Brussels, 2022), p. 19.

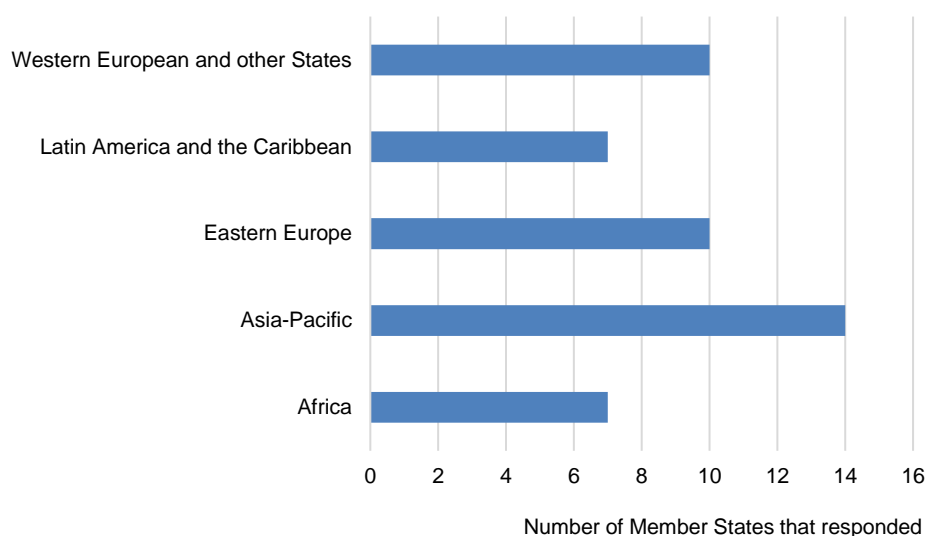
¹¹ CoP19 Doc. 75 (Rev. 1).

¹² The questionnaire sent to Member States can be accessed online (<https://forms.office.com/r/sc1FJCLC0N>).

authorities, and ministries of interior, justice, environment and foreign affairs.¹³ All regions were represented, with 7 responses received from African States, 14 from Asia-Pacific States, 10 from Eastern European States, 7 from Latin America and Caribbean States and 10 from Western European and other States (see figure III).

Figure III

Member State responses, by geographical region



16. The secretariat also requested, through electronic correspondence on 8 December 2022, information from relevant United Nations entities on the implementation of the resolution. Responses were received from the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and UNODC. These responses were incorporated into the present report, together with information submitted by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime.

A. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/311 by Member States

17. In its resolution 75/311, the General Assembly invited Member States, relevant United Nations entities and other international organizations to strengthen partnerships and cooperation to promote a holistic approach to address health and environmental aspects of wildlife trade, using holistic, all-hazards and One Health approaches.¹⁴ In its response on the topic in the questionnaire, Austria highlighted that close cooperation between customs, veterinarian authorities and designated authorities under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was already common practice in the country. Egypt noted that it established a One Health system several years ago, through which public health authorities worked with a broader stakeholder community to tackle human, animal and environmental health holistically, including through an advisory group which was finalizing the national One Health strategy. In Thailand, relevant authorities were

¹³ Albania, Andorra, Austria, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Ghana, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Türkiye and the United States of America.

¹⁴ The World Health Organization defines "One Health" as follows: "One Health is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment. It is particularly important to prevent, predict, detect, and respond to global health threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic".

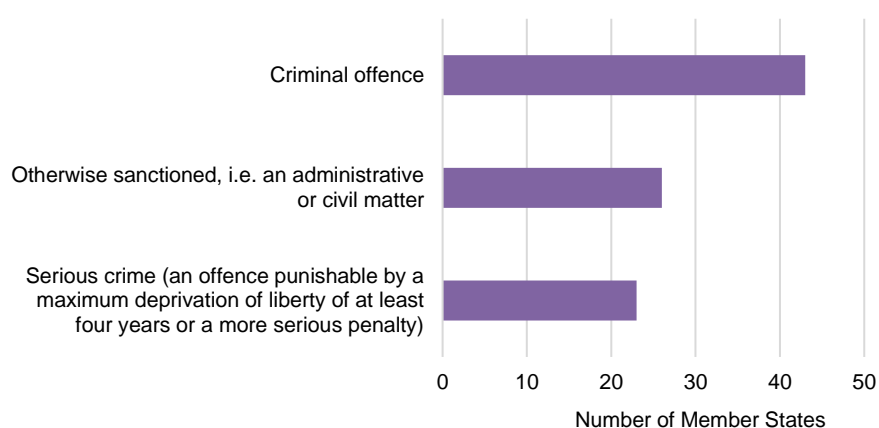
collaborating in using One Health approaches, including in conducting research, monitoring diseases and increasing collaboration with national and international laboratories. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service was working both internally and with partner agencies to develop a zoonotic disease surveillance enforcement task force and provide training to front-line officers in order to improve safety and target priority disease vectors in the wildlife trade.

18. In its resolution [75/311](#), the General Assembly urged Member States to take decisive steps to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trade in wildlife, including by strengthening legislation and regulations. More than 40 per cent of Member States that responded to the questionnaire (that is, 21 States) reported that legislation had been amended, 8 Member States had adopted new regulations related to illicit trafficking in wildlife, and 13 Member States had introduced new measures to harmonize judicial, legal and administrative regulations. Almost one third of Member States (14 States) indicated that they had not implemented any of the aforementioned measures during the reporting period.

19. In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States to make illicit trafficking in protected species of wild fauna and flora involving organized criminal groups a serious crime. Article 2, subparagraph (b), of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines a crime as serious when it is “punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty”. This is the definition applied in the present report. Furthermore, the Organized Crime Convention provides Member States with a framework for providing mutual legal assistance in investigations and prosecutions of serious crimes. The great majority of Member States responding to the questionnaire (that is, 43 of the 48 States responding) reported that illicit trafficking in wildlife was a criminal offence in their jurisdiction. In 54 per cent (26) of Member States, illicit trafficking in wildlife was sanctioned in other ways, for example, as administrative or civil matters. Approximately half (23) of Member States reported that illicit trafficking in wildlife was a serious crime in their jurisdiction (see figure IV).

Figure IV

Treatment of illicit trafficking in wildlife by Member States



20. Member States were also encouraged to take appropriate measures to enforce the provisions of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, including measures to penalize trade in or possession of such illegally traded specimens. To achieve this, national laws implementing the Convention must meet minimum requirements, including that national law should prohibit trade in specimens in violation of the Convention, penalize such trade and enable confiscation of specimens illegally traded or possessed. National legislation was analysed in accordance with the minimum requirements and placed in one of three categories: legislation that was believed generally to meet the requirements for implementation of the Convention (category 1); legislation that was believed generally not to meet all of the requirements for the implementation of the Convention

(category 2); and legislation that was believed generally not to meet the requirements for the implementation of the Convention (category 3). According to the secretariat of the Convention, by June 2022, of the 184 parties to the Convention, the national legislation of 108 parties was considered to be in category 1 and the national legislation of 41 parties was placed in category 2. This suggests that approximately 20 per cent of parties to the Convention do not have legislation in place that enables effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

21. In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States to review and amend national legislation, as necessary and appropriate, so that offences connected to the illegal trade in wildlife were treated as predicate offences, as defined in the Organized Crime Convention. Almost two thirds (29) of Member States responding to the questionnaire indicated that, under their national legislation, illicit trafficking in wildlife was considered a predicate offence, 21 per cent (10) responded that it was not treated as a predicate offence and the remaining 19 per cent (9) did not know whether or not it was treated as a predicate offence.

22. Member States were encouraged to make use, to the greatest extent possible, of legal instruments available at the national level. Of Member States responding to the questionnaire, some (13 States) reported having used money-laundering-related legislation for the prosecution of illicit trafficking in wildlife. Further, some Member States (13 States) had used corruption-related legislation to prosecute illicit trafficking in wildlife, a larger number of responding Member States had used legislation on fraud (19 States) and legislation on financial crime (17 States), and some had used racketeering legislation (8 States). A total of 38 per cent of responding Member States had not used any such legislation for investigating or prosecuting those involved in illicit trafficking in wildlife.

23. In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States to integrate, as appropriate, the investigation of financial crimes linked to wildlife trafficking into wildlife crime investigations and increase the use of financial investigation techniques. Almost half of Member States responding (23 States) reported that investigating financial or economic crimes linked to illicit trafficking in wildlife was now part of their standard procedure, whereas one third (16) reported that it was not.

24. Member States were urged to increase the exchange of information and knowledge among national authorities, as well as among Member States and international crime authorities. Almost all (47) Member States responding to the questionnaire reported enhanced information-sharing related to illicit trafficking in wildlife, with 39 reporting enhanced sharing among national authorities, 25 with regional bodies, 31 with international bodies and 23 with civil society. Almost half (22) of Member States reported sharing information with another State. Moreover, Member States reported coordinating with other States in a variety of ways: 14 Member States engaged in mutual legal assistance, 7 in extradition, 28 on law enforcement cooperation, 31 on joint trainings or workshops, 19 in joint strategies; and 19 in the repatriation of live illegally traded wildlife.

25. The General Assembly called on Member States to report all seizures in their annual illegal trade reports under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. A total of 101 annual illegal trade reports pertaining to seizures made in 2021 were submitted to the secretariat of the Convention, including 24 reports from dependent territories and one report from the European Union. Some Member States that had not submitted reports noted the reasons for not doing so, which included a lack of data, not having seizures to report, administrative deficiencies and challenging political situations.

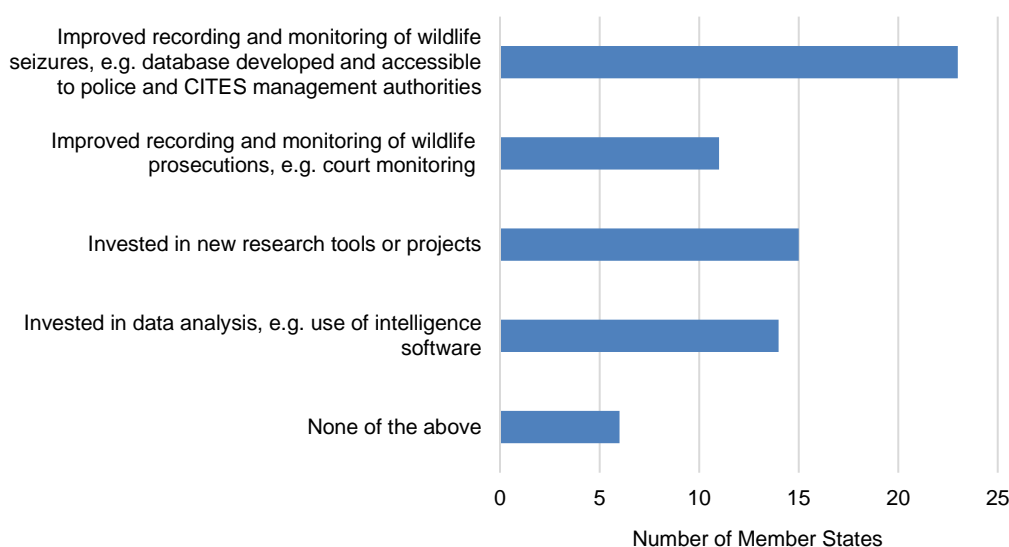
26. In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States to recognize the importance of research to understand the root causes of poaching and illegal harvesting of timber, as well as the market drivers. Some Member States reported collecting data on root causes and market drivers related to poaching (21) and illegal harvesting of timber (15), and on risks of increased poaching, such as declines in

tourism and associated revenues (5). More than 30 per cent (15) of Member States reported that they were not currently collecting data on such issues.

27. The General Assembly also encouraged Member States to enhance their enforcement efforts, including through recording and monitoring both seizures and successful prosecutions, in order to more effectively counter and deter the illegal trade in wildlife. Almost half of Member States reported improved recording and monitoring of wildlife seizures (23), and almost one quarter reported improved recording and monitoring of prosecutions (11). Approximately 30 per cent of Member States reported having invested in new research tools or projects (15) and in data analysis (14) (see figure V).

Figure V

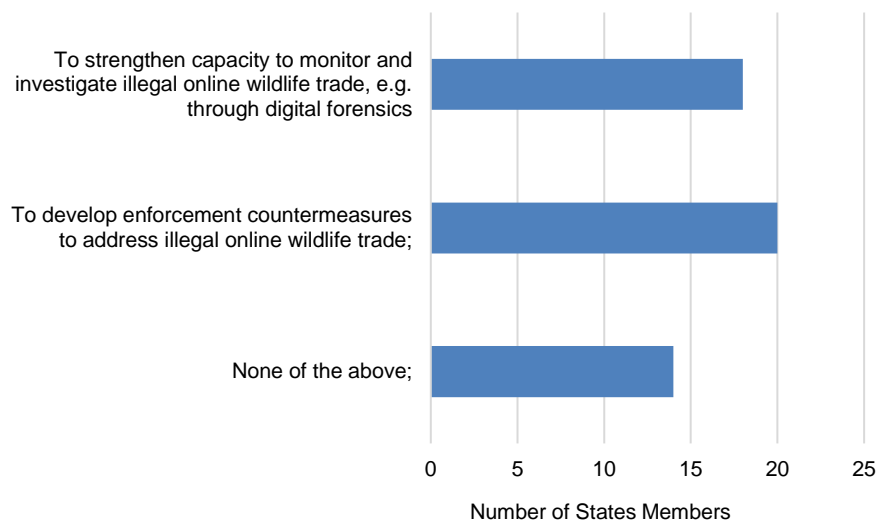
Improvements in data collection and research related to illicit trafficking in wildlife among Member States



28. Some Member States described recent improvements in data collection and research and the ways that the information had been used to inform national responses to wildlife trafficking. For example, in Canada, a risk assessment directorate was created, which had improved data collection to inform national responses. Improvements in Canada included using data science and artificial intelligence solutions to maximize the use of existing organizational data sets, and the implementation of risk-based principles to develop intelligence to inform operational focus and resource allotment. In Côte d'Ivoire, a standard operating procedure was introduced to manage seized wildlife products, improving their traceability and preventing their return to the black market.

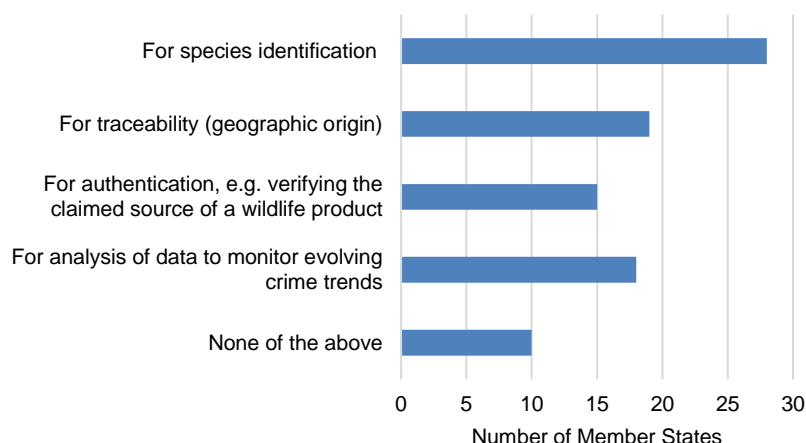
29. In its resolution, the General Assembly called upon Member States to strengthen appropriate capacity for law enforcement agencies to monitor and investigate illegal online wildlife trade. Almost 40 per cent (18) of Member States reported taking measures to strengthen capacity for monitoring and investigating and more than 40 per cent (20) of Member States reported that they had developed enforcement countermeasures to address such trade. Almost one third of Member States (14) had not implemented any such measures in the reporting period since the resolution was adopted in July 2021 (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Measures taken by Member States to strengthen capacity in addressing illegal online wildlife trade



30. In its resolution, the General Assembly invited Member States to work in cooperation with relevant organizations to identify and promote the use of solutions that utilize technology. Almost 60 per cent (28) of Member States responding to the questionnaire reported that they used technology for species identification, 40 per cent (19) for traceability (geographic origin), 31 per cent (15) for authentication and 38 per cent (18) for analysis of data to monitor evolving crime trends (see figure VII). Approximately 20 per cent (10) of Member States had not used technology for any such purposes. Approximately one fifth of Member States (9 States) reported monitoring the Internet for illegal trade of wildlife online, including through use of open-source investigation techniques, and using cybercrime teams to recover digital evidence. Member States used electronic databases to record and share information at the national level. In the responses, Andorra referred to its use of electronic permit systems, and China described its use of electronic systems for assessing risks of wildlife trafficking in order to support the inspection and detection of smuggled wildlife products. In Colombia, drones were used to identify deforestation hotspots that were difficult to access and in Côte d'Ivoire, DNA analysis was carried out on large ivory seizures. In Japan, image identification using artificial intelligence was being trialled to tackle smuggling of rare endemic species. South Africa was expanding its digital monitoring of national environmental crime to include international incidents, which allowed for the analysis of hotspots and trends. In Türkiye, photo traps and other technological devices related to image acquisition were actively used.

Figure VII
Measures taken by Member States to use technology to counter illicit trafficking in wildlife



31. The General Assembly urged Member States to increase efforts and resources to raise awareness about and address the problems and risks associated with the supply and transit of and demand for illegal wildlife products. The vast majority (92 per cent) of Member States responding to the questionnaire reported that they had conducted or supported awareness-raising campaigns on wildlife trafficking and the majority (38) of Member States had conducted campaigns to raise awareness of laws prohibiting illegal trade in wildlife and the associated penalties. In addition, more than half (25) of responding Member States had conducted campaigns focused on demand reduction and 22 Member States had conducted campaigns focused on supply reduction.

32. Member States were called upon to recognize the crucial role played by rangers and guards in the fight against illicit wildlife trafficking, in often very challenging conditions, to bolster and monitor ranger safety and activity in protected areas, to improve rangers' working conditions and welfare and to provide them with decent wages, necessary training, equipment and institutional support. More than a third of responding Member States (18) reported the regular provision of equipment and training for rangers. Canada reported having taken several measures before and after the adoption of the resolution to improve safety, working conditions and welfare of wildlife and environmental enforcement officers, including implementing an officer safety risk assessment to help officers and managers identify and mitigate risks to officer safety; providing enforcement-specific mental health resources, such as specialized counsellors and training; implementing a programme to provide push-to-talk radios connected to dispatch or emergency services as a requirement for field officers; and union-led renegotiation of collective agreements to provide increased wages and improved work conditions. In Peru, multisectoral meetings had been held to develop strategies for addressing the welfare of rangers. In their responses, Mexico, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago referred to budgetary constraints preventing the improvement of conditions for rangers. Four Member States reported that, although they had not introduced any measures since the adoption of the resolution, the rangers in their countries were covered by various policies and legislation that ensured decent working conditions and wages.

33. Member States were invited to support the efforts of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. The General Assembly further encouraged Member States to increase support to countries especially where the socioeconomic or fiscal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the continuation of existing relevant domestic projects and programmes. A total of 20 Member States reported having provided capacity-building support, but only 12 Member States reported an increase in such provision. Only eight Member

States reported provision of financial assistance to other States and only two of those reported an increase in such assistance.

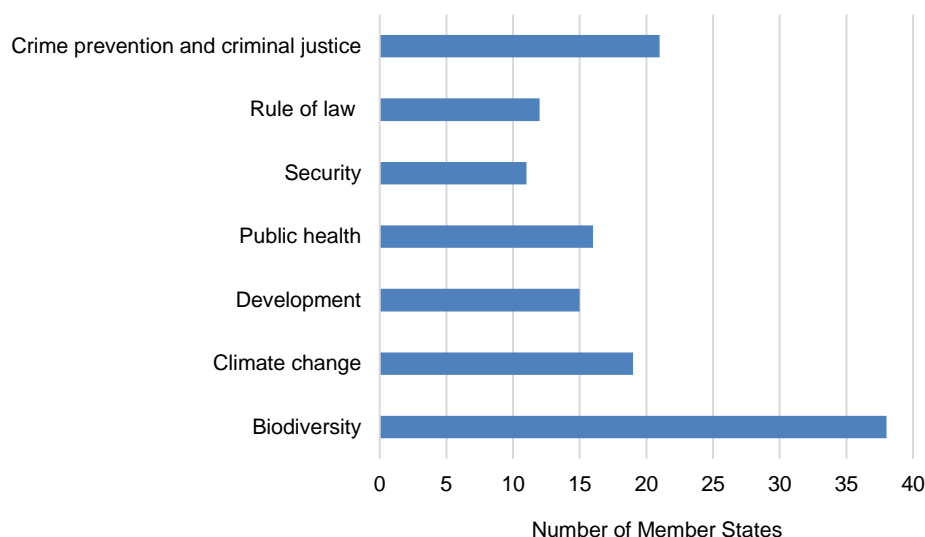
34. The General Assembly called upon Member States to ensure the full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership of women in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes addressing illicit wildlife trafficking. When asked whether measures had been taken in that regard, almost one quarter of Member States (13) described the ways that gender equality and equal opportunities were enshrined in national legislation and policies and stated that discrimination on grounds of gender was not permitted. Other Member States described the ways in which women were involved in various policies and programmes addressing illicit wildlife trafficking. For example, in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, there are women park rangers, and in the Philippines there are female wildlife enforcement officers and women working in the wildlife traffic monitoring unit. Few Member States described specific measures taken to ensure the full and effective participation of women. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Ministry of Water and Forests established a dedicated gender unit. In Japan, the Ministry of the Environment was promoting the hiring of female rangers, to increase the percentage from 30 to 35 per cent. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service reported providing leadership opportunities for women and candidates from underrepresented groups of the population in the implementation of all its law enforcement programmes.

35. Member States were also strongly encouraged to increase the capacity of local communities to pursue alternative livelihoods and enhance support for sustainable livelihoods. One third of Member States (16) reported engaging in community-led wildlife conservation initiatives and almost one third (15) of Member States responded that they had engaged in public-private partnerships. A total of 42 per cent (20) of Member States reported implementing sustainable tourism programmes, less than a third (13) reported engaging in revenue-sharing agreements and a quarter (12) of Member States that responded reported enhancing the rights and capacities of local communities.

36. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to integrate measures to address illegal trade in wildlife into development policy and planning. Figure VIII illustrates the proportion of responding Member States that have integrated measures to address illicit wildlife trafficking into policy and planning related to sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity, public health, security, rule of law, and crime prevention and criminal justice. The majority (38) of responding Member States reported integrating measures into biodiversity policy and planning, whereas integration across other sectors was much less common (see figure VIII).

Figure VIII

Integration of measures to address illegal trade in wildlife into cross-sectoral policy and planning by Member States



37. Member States were called upon to prohibit, prevent and counter any form of corruption that facilitated illicit trafficking in wildlife. Some Member States reported that they had not taken any such measures, whereas others had strategies under development. For example, El Salvador reported that corruption related to environmental crimes had not been monitored, as its environmental police had faced reductions in terms of the number of personnel and logistical equipment available to it. Many Member States indicated that their existing anti-corruption laws applied to all forms of corruption, including prohibiting corruption linked to trafficking in wildlife. Some Member States had strengthened laws addressing all forms of corruption. For example, in Kyrgyzstan and Peru, penalties for corruption had increased. In Tajikistan, a State strategy for combating corruption in the country for the period up to 2030 had been adopted. Member States had engaged in efforts to prevent corruption by increasing the transparency of processes and procedures, implementing internal supervision systems and conducting awareness-raising initiatives. Eight Member States referred to efforts to assess and mitigate corruption risks in their countries. Member States reported efforts to counter corruption that included organizing training to investigate and prosecute corruption. For example, in Tunisia, training workshops were held to build the capacity of enforcement officials in investigating and prosecuting corruption, and meetings were held with judges and prosecutors to sensitize them to the seriousness of wildlife crime. In Brazil, internal investigations were conducted into incidents of corruption, and in Colombia, several investigations were carried out to prosecute acts of corruption committed relating to the granting of licences, authorizations or irregular permits for the use of natural resources. Some Member States encouraged reporting of wildlife crime and corruption through hotlines and in the Republic of Korea, for example, members of the public who reported wildlife trafficking received a monetary reward.

38. Member States were encouraged to take measures making permit systems more resilient to corruption. According to information from the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, parties were moving towards fully automated and electronic processes for permits. A total of 20 parties currently had some form of electronic permit system in place related to the Convention, and approximately 40 additional parties were in the process of developing such systems.

39. The General Assembly called upon Member States to ensure that legal domestic markets for wildlife products were not used to mask the trade in illegal wildlife products. The majority (37) of Member States reported conducting inspections of

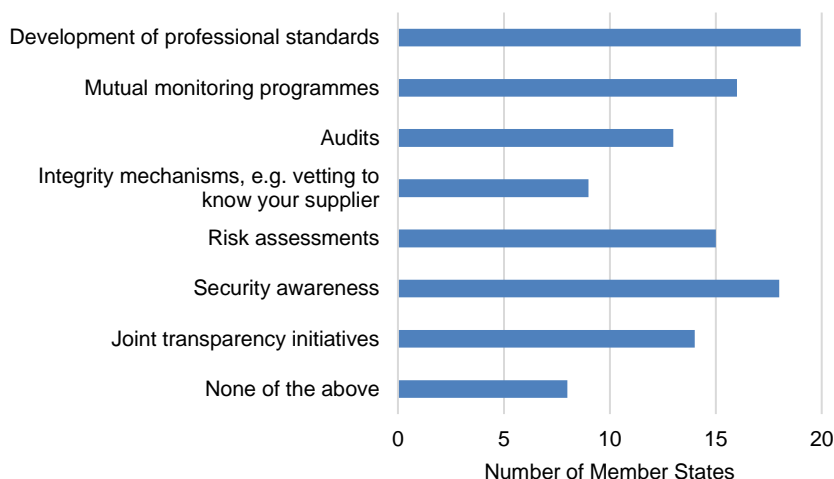
wildlife markets and facilities. In one third (16) of Member States, certain confiscated wildlife specimens were destroyed. A total of 65 per cent (31) of Member States reported monitoring online trade as a way to monitor legal domestic trade. Just over half (25) of Member States reported undertaking investigations and operations to identify illegalities at legal wildlife markets. More than half (27) of Member States responded that registration of certain wildlife specimens was required in their countries. Some Member States reported closing legal domestic markets for wildlife. For example, China reported placing a ban on commercial processing and sales of ivory and rhinoceros and tiger specimens. In Egypt, measures were taken to stop wildlife trade in the largest animal market in Cairo and many shops in the trade had closed. Spain reported that new European regulations had made the conditions for ivory trade particularly stringent, making the current legal requirements much more restrictive.

40. The General Assembly strongly encouraged Member States to enforce all necessary sanitary monitoring, measures and controls to protect human or animal health. When asked about the implementation of such measures regarding markets selling dead and live wild animals and wildlife products, five Member States responded that they did not have domestic markets for wildlife and some other respondents indicated that they were not the relevant authority for providing information on the matter. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, coordination meetings were held to ensure appropriate implementation of zoonotic disease control plans. In China, the law on wildlife conservation stipulated that the artificial breeding of key national protected wildlife must ensure the necessary sanitary and health conditions according to the habits of wild animals and meet the relevant technical standards and epidemic prevention requirements. In addition, quarantine certificates were required for the transportation of protected wild animals, and the consumption of wildlife as food was prohibited. Six Member States reported regular inspections of markets and wildlife facilities. Education and awareness-raising measures were also reported by three Member States. Various sanitary measures were reported as being taken at ports of entry, for example in Poland, authorities were trained, there was an information campaign (using posters and leaflets), people were inspected and disinfecting mats were used by all. In Spain, the Nature Protection Service of the Spanish Civil Guard worked closely with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora management authority through the exchange of information and analysis of importers, breeders and other wildlife-related businesses. Sweden referred to extensive European Union and national legislation aimed at protecting human and animal health. In Thailand, a study was conducted to monitor for coronaviruses and other infectious diseases in exotic pets. Trinidad and Tobago indicated that a lack of funding and human resources was preventing the monitoring of ports of entry where non-native animals were supposed to be seized, quarantined, tested and disposed of in cases where diseases were detected. In the United States, wildlife inspectors worked collaboratively with other agencies and departments to ensure human and animal health regulations and concerns were addressed with respect to the importation of wildlife and wildlife products.

41. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to facilitate professional standards and mutual monitoring programmes on supply chain security to prevent the introduction of illegally sourced wildlife into legal trade chains. A total of 40 per cent (19) of Member States reported developing professional standards, one third (16) of Member States reported engaging in mutual monitoring programmes and 27 per cent (13) of Member States reported conducting audits. Fewer (9) Member States reported the use of integrity mechanisms for supply chain security. Almost one third (15) of Member States reported conducting risk assessments to ensure supply chain security, 38 per cent (18) of Member States implemented security awareness measures and 29 per cent (14) engaged in joint transparency initiatives. A total of 17 per cent (8) of Member States reported that they had not taken any of the measures listed (see figure IX).

Figure IX

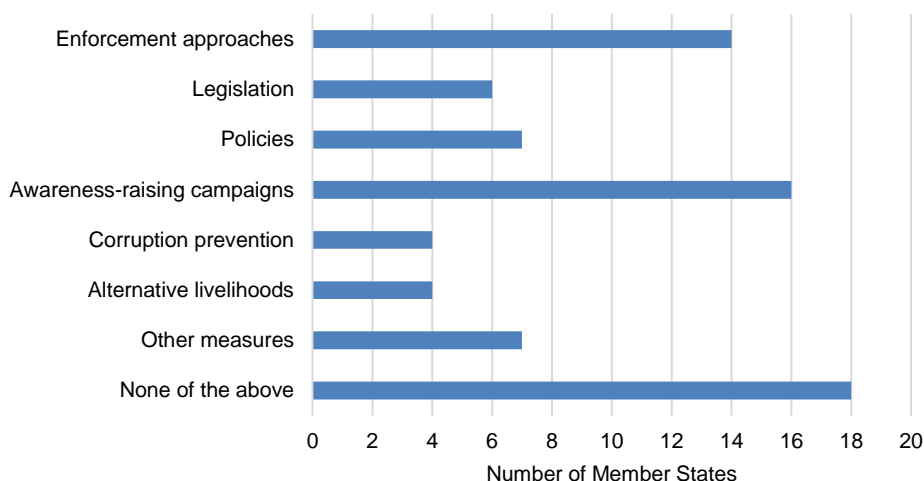
Measures taken to promote supply chain security to prevent the introduction of illegally sourced wildlife into legal trade chains



42. Since the adoption of resolution [75/311](#), Member States continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat gathered information on the impact of the pandemic on wildlife trafficking and any related measures introduced. More than a third (18) of Member States had not introduced any measures. Approximately one third (16) had introduced awareness-raising campaigns and just under one third (14) had introduced new enforcement approaches. Some Member States had introduced changes in policy (7), legislation (6), corruption prevention (4), a alternative livelihoods (4) or other measures (7) (see figure X).

Figure X

Measures taken to address illicit trafficking in wildlife in response to the coronavirus disease pandemic



43. Member States were also asked how the COVID-19 pandemic affected wildlife trafficking and to describe any trends that may have been identified. The varied responses showed that the pandemic affected countries in different ways. Almost one third (13) of Member States recorded a decrease in detected cases of wildlife trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown period. One fifth of Member States (10) reported a change in the modalities of trafficking, for example an increase in online trade and trade by post. Some Member States (9) reported that there had been no impact but a smaller number of Member States (4) reported an increase in cases of wildlife trafficking. For example, in Austria, there was an overall decrease in seizures owing to

reduced airplane traffic and a strong decrease in seizures from tourists, as well as a notable increase in postal seizures. In South Africa, there was a reported increase in subsistence poaching and a decrease in rhinoceros poaching during the hard lockdown period. In Trinidad and Tobago, there was a reported decrease in patrols, funding seizures, monitoring of ports and research but also a decrease in poaching itself.

44. A range of common issues were identified as significant challenges in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in wildlife. Those most commonly reported were a lack of human, financial or technical resources. Some Member States highlighted that their available resources simply did not match the scale of the problem nor the resources available to the criminal actors involved. A lack of specialized personnel and high turnover rates also posed challenges, together with a lack of the necessary tools, technologies and equipment in some Member States. The identification of trafficked species was a major challenge, with some Member States noting that it was difficult to obtain the necessary scientific support. Furthermore, surveillance of national borders was reported as a key challenge, as was the surveillance of areas that were difficult for the police to access. Member States reported limited awareness of the problem, not only among the public but also among prosecutors and in the judicial system. A lack of appropriate legislation and lenient penalties were also noted. Private sector companies and their supply chains were also noted as posing significant challenges. Other concerns that were reported included online trade, demand reduction and the difficulty in measuring the success of related interventions. A lack of coordination and cooperation at all levels also hampered efforts, as information exchange could often be difficult. One Member State noted that the absence of a central registry of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora permits meant that all data must be requested through international cooperation, which was frequently an onerous and lengthy process.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 75/311 by United Nations entities

45. In its resolution 75/311, the General Assembly called upon United Nations entities, within their respective mandates, to continue to support efforts by Member States to fight illicit trafficking in wildlife. Efforts are currently being undertaken by entities including the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, UNDP, UNEP, UNODC and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime. This section of the report outlines the work of these entities since the adoption of resolution 75/311.

46. The General Assembly invited Member States, relevant United Nations entities and other international organizations to strengthen partnerships and cooperation to promote a holistic approach to address health and environmental aspects of wildlife trade. One example of such a partnership is the new Nature for Health (N4H) initiative, a United Nations multi-partner trust fund and consortium that aims to prevent future pandemics by fostering locally developed and integrated approaches to secure the health of people, animals and the environment. Another example is the Safety across Asia for the Global Environment (SAFE) project, an initiative for reducing zoonotic risks and wildlife crime that is being implemented by UNODC, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNEP and other stakeholders, under which a science-based assessment framework has been developed to support Member States in identifying facilities handling wildlife in South-East Asia that pose risks for human health and reducing these risks. The Quadripartite Partnership for One Health has developed the One Health Joint Plan of Action and its implementation plan. The decisions adopted at the nineteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora would guide the work of the secretariat of the Convention in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

had been adopted and included a target (target 5) on the use, harvesting and trade of wild species in a sustainable, safe and legal manner, to prevent overexploitation and reduce the risk of pathogen spillover, applying the ecosystem approach, while respecting and protecting customary sustainable use by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

47. Member States and relevant United Nations entities, as well as other international organizations, were encouraged to increase support to countries for tackling poaching, illegal harvesting of timber and illegal trade in wildlife, especially where the socioeconomic or fiscal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the continuation of existing relevant domestic projects and programmes. UNDP helped Member States to access funding, the level of which increased from \$84 million in 2020 to \$97 million in 2022. UNODC also increased its level of support, from supporting 36 countries in 2020 to 40 countries in 2022. In 2022, the world's first wildlife conservation bond was issued by the World Bank to help increase the population of the endangered black rhinoceros in South Africa. A total of \$150 million had been raised from institutional investors, which would fund sustainable programmes around the world.¹⁵

48. The General Assembly called upon United Nations agencies to continue ensuring systematic gender mainstreaming into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. UNDP-supported programmes on combating illegal wildlife trade were obliged to identify and address gender issues in a systematic manner so that the outcomes were gender-responsive. Gender analysis was undertaken throughout the project cycle, and gender action plans with budgets were incorporated in the outcomes, outputs and activities. Gender markers were assigned to individual projects to ensure that each project contributed to advancing gender equality.

49. The secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora reported its continuing support for tackling trafficking in wildlife through, among other things, capacity-building and the provision of legal advice, compliance and enforcement assistance, and technical and other support for wildlife law enforcement efforts worldwide. At its nineteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora had adopted several decisions and resolutions on enforcement related to anti-corruption and financial crime.

50. UNDP continued to convene partners for promoting transboundary wildlife conservation and to provide policy and capacity-building support for combating the illegal wildlife trade, human-wildlife conflict management and the development of wildlife economies. UNDP is a core partner in the Global Wildlife Program, which is a global partnership for wildlife conservation and crime prevention for sustainable development, funded by the Global Environment Facility and coordinated by the World Bank, and bringing together 37 projects across 32 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. UNDP was supporting 10 countries in Africa, 5 countries in Asia and 2 countries in Latin America.

51. UNEP continued to support Member States in tackling the illegal wildlife trade through the provision of policy support at the national, regional and global levels. For example, UNEP supported policymakers in Botswana and Zimbabwe in developing national and bilateral policy agendas to improve coexistence between local communities and wildlife. UNEP was also currently supporting transboundary integrated land-use planning in the Congo basin in order to provide safe and extensive habitat for endangered species, and empowering Indigenous Peoples, local communities and forest-dependent peoples in the region. UNEP was also empowering local communities to support the protection of endangered mountain species in Virunga National Park, the Caucasus and the Himalayas.

52. UNODC supported more than 40 Member States across Africa, Asia and Latin America in strengthening national responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife, by

¹⁵ See <https://treasury.worldbank.org/en/about/unit/treasury/ibrd/wildlife-conservation-bond>.

training over 5,000 criminal justice practitioners and supporting more than 100 investigations into wildlife offences. UNODC built capacity to conduct parallel financial investigations, prevent corruption and conduct wildlife forensic analysis; provided normative guidance and supported the review and development of legislation; compiled legislation, case law and national strategies related to wildlife crime in an online knowledge management portal; co-facilitated successful regional customs operations; and supported international cooperation among law enforcement agencies. A series of rapid reference guides for investigators and prosecutors of wildlife crime continued to be produced and further tertiary education modules on wildlife crime had been developed. The UNODC-led Airport Communication Programme (AIRCOP) (implemented in partnership with INTERPOL and WCO) and Container Control Programme (implemented in partnership with WCO) built the capacities of law enforcement at air, sea and land borders in identifying and intercepting illicit wildlife commodities and wildlife commodities protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, leading to seizures that included 28 tons of dried seahorses, 6.2 tons of pangolin scales, 573 kg of seahorses, 457 kg of elephant ivory and 170 m³ of timber.

53. The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime continued to implement targeted activities for building law enforcement capacity and improving cooperation to combat wildlife crime. It built the capacity of investigators for responding to wildlife crime as serious organized crime, and enhanced knowledge of advanced investigation techniques. Capacity-building also included corruption risk mitigation and financial investigations linked to wildlife crime. The Consortium also mentored prosecutors, sensitized judges, conducted regional investigative and analytical case management meetings, and supported the “Thunder” series of global operations targeting illegal trade in flora and fauna. To strengthen cooperation at regional levels, the Consortium convened the Fourth Global Meeting of Wildlife Enforcement Networks and supported the reinvigoration of those networks. It also continued to implement the *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit* and *Indicator Framework* in Member States at their request.

54. In resolution 75/311, the General Assembly called upon UNODC to continue to collect information on patterns and flows of trafficking in wildlife and to report thereon biennially. As part of its wildlife crime research efforts, UNODC had strengthened data and information collection, through offender interviews, case reviews on corruption-related factors, field enquiry into gender-related factors and an analysis of the evidence of effective methods for reducing wildlife crime. Efforts had been made to support improved reporting of illegal trade data by Member States in Latin America. UNODC had published a research paper on linkages between the illegal wildlife trade, ecosystem harm and climate change in November 2022 and continued to gather data and develop the methodology needed to track progress on Sustainable Development Goal target indicator 15.7.

55. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to further improve the coordination of activities undertaken by the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. United Nations entities reported working with relevant stakeholders to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach in tackling wildlife trafficking, including by establishing working groups and task forces. For example, relevant United Nations entities continued to collaborate through the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products. In 2022, the Task Force continued to make quarterly calls to identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration, as well as to hold special sessions on timber-related work and on the Global Environment Facility. United Nations entities had also strengthened engagement with the private sector, for example through the United for Wildlife task forces. Other examples of successful cooperation include the work of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and partnerships under the Global Environment Facility.

IV. Proposals for possible future action

56. The proposals included in the present section are not an exhaustive list of actions but rather, are recommendations based on insights gained through the analysis of Member State responses to the request for information on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [75/311](#) and on the experience of UNODC in providing technical assistance globally. They should be considered by Member States, relevant United Nations entities and other international organizations.

57. Some Member States provided useful examples of ways that they were using technology to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. Much more could be done, however, by Member States and the international community to harness technology, replicating good practices used elsewhere and using artificial intelligence where applicable.

58. Online platforms, including social media, are increasingly being used to facilitate illicit trafficking in wildlife products. Law enforcement agencies need to strengthen their capacity to investigate online illegal sales of wildlife and wildlife products, infiltrate existing online markets, collect relevant evidence, including by using digital forensics, and develop enforcement countermeasures.

59. Robust evidential identification of illegally traded species, and their parts and derivatives, continues to be a significant challenge when prosecuting trafficking in wildlife. There has been progress made in the field of wildlife forensic science, with increased capacity and prosecution success as a result, in some Member States. Additional investment is required to increase the access to wildlife forensic services in other key Member States that are subject to wildlife trade pressure.

60. Few Member States reported specific measures being taken to ensure full and effective participation of women in the development and implementation of relevant policies and programmes addressing illicit wildlife trafficking. Member States are encouraged to address this gap by organizing dialogues, round tables and skill-sharing sessions, among other initiatives.

61. Rangers and guards play a vital role in the protection of wildlife from poaching and trafficking. They must be provided with appropriate tools and training to ensure their enhanced professionalization and safety, and they must be appropriately remunerated. Assessments of the risk to the safety of rangers should be carried out as a standard practice. Member States should consider establishing gender-related targets in the recruitment of rangers and guards.

62. Member States should acknowledge the link between wild animals and zoonotic disease, in particular emerging novel diseases, and take steps to ensure that any trading of wildlife species, throughout its entire value chain, is both lawful and compliant with specific licence requirements on reducing the risks of pathogen emergence and transmission.

63. Licence requirements for commercial wildlife operations should be closely aligned with commercial livestock licence controls and be developed following a One Health approach to ensure that sufficient conditions are incorporated to mitigate the additional risks associated with the wildlife trade supply chain. Regular and, if possible, unannounced site-based inspections of commercial wildlife operations must be undertaken if a licence-based system is to be effective.

64. Better understanding of the problem of illicit trafficking in wildlife is required for the development of appropriate and successful solutions. There remains a lack of sufficient research and data on wildlife crime in many countries and at the global level. Further efforts are needed by Member States to collect, analyse and share data, including through submission of annual illegal trade reports to the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and to use the information to design evidence-based policies. Further research on the relationship between conflict and wildlife crime is encouraged.

65. Addressing any vulnerabilities in legislation can help reduce opportunities for wildlife crime to persist. Member States are encouraged to review and strengthen legislation, as necessary, including by making trafficking in wildlife involving organized criminal groups a serious crime; ensuring offences related to wildlife trafficking are treated as predicate offences for the purposes of domestic money-laundering offences; and ensuring the integration of the relevant conventions (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) into domestic law.

66. Financial investigations linked to wildlife trafficking are not regularly undertaken and not part of standard procedure for most Member States. Training and mentorship, as well as political will, are required if Member States are to build capacity in this area.

67. Although corruption is a known facilitator of illicit trafficking in wildlife, few Member States reported taking measures to prohibit, prevent or counter corruption linked to wildlife trafficking. Corruption prevention and risk mitigation measures should be strengthened and prioritized by Member States. Anti-corruption frameworks should be strengthened; ethical practices, integrity and transparency should be promoted; and efforts to prevent conflicts of interest should be made.

68. Each link of a supply chain is vulnerable to criminality. Illegally sourced wildlife can be laundered by entering legal supply chains. Survey responses suggest that this area requires more attention and action from Member States. A value chain analysis can be a useful first step for identifying points along the chain at which different types of criminal offences typically occur, followed by the design and implementation of mitigating interventions to protect the legitimate supply chain. A multifaceted response is needed, including improved traceability mechanisms, and engagement with the private sector, including through information-sharing and enhanced networks.

69. A cross-disciplinary approach at the national level is required, bringing together law enforcement, wildlife management authorities and other relevant authorities, such as financial intelligence units, and public health and safety, administrative and local authorities, to ensure inter-agency coordination that can enable cooperation.

70. Developing specialized capacities within the criminal justice system, including prevention and awareness-raising, investigation, prosecution and adjudication, remains a priority. Prosecutors require support so that they can work closely with investigators to identify at the outset of investigations the elements that need to be proved and collect the necessary evidence to build strong cases. Sensitization of magistrates is required to ensure understanding of the seriousness of illicit trafficking in wildlife and the need for appropriate and deterrent sentencing. Additional work on the prevention of such crimes is required, including through partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

71. Although international cooperation is improving, Member States could take better advantage of tools available through the Organized Crime Convention, including mutual legal assistance, extradition, joint investigations and the use of specialized investigative techniques. Promoting South-South exchanges and regional specialized networks could be instrumental to achieving greater cooperation.

72. Criminal justice responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife should be integrated into broader national and international sustainable development agendas, including those relating to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, climate change, health and multilateral partnerships, all of which are negatively affected by trafficking in wildlife. A balanced approach is required; enforcement responses should be complemented by raising awareness, reducing demand, addressing inequalities and providing sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities, and actively involving local communities in safeguarding biodiversity.