

Intra SBS MUN

United Nations Environment Program

Background Guide

2021

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Message from the Executive Board:

Miraya Agarwal, Chair-

Greeting delegates! It is my privilege to be your Chair for the most salient committee of the United Nations for environmental stability, the 'United Nations Environmental Program' for this edition of intra-SBSMUN. MUNs have taught me essential skills such as finding creative solutions to issues, and I hope this experience teaches you the same as we discuss one of the most complex and prominent conflicts, wildlife trafficking. I hope you are as excited as I am to participate in the cogent debate, and to think critically as well as dynamically. As delegates of this committee, you shall be expected to be well prepared for a fast-paced debate on this platform of deliberation. I hope that this stimulation of the UNEP prepares you for your future. If you have any doubts do not hesitate in reaching out. Cheers!

Kyra Chhetri, Vice Chair-

Dear delegates, I am honoured to be the vice chair of the UNEP for this year's Intra-SBS MUN. We hope to make these few days an unforgettable and amazing learning experience with exciting and stimulating debate. Wildlife trafficking is one of the most urgent issues our world faces today with many different social, economic and environmental aspects at risk. I hope to see you engage critically with this topic and provide some constructive solutions as well. If this is all relatively new to you, don't be scared as all of us have been in the same situation once. It is natural to feel nervous in the beginning, but as you start talking and giving your own opinions, it will be thrilling and riveting! Wishing you all the very best!

Addya Raj, Rapporteur-

Established in Kenya in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme rose with the paramount objective of "care for the environment." As your rapporteur I expect you to delve deep into the problem of wildlife trafficking with special emphasis on India, but mere research won't be sufficient. It is only when you combine it with your ability to think quickly and adapt to the committee proceedings that you succeed. I look forward to a stimulating and fruitful committee!

Introduction to UNEP:

What is UNEP?

The United Nations Environment Programme is responsible for coordinating responses to environmental issues within the United Nations system. It was established by Maurice Strong, its first director, after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June 1972.

It is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. Its headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. It is led by the United Nations under-secretary general and executive director.

Functions of UNEP:

UNEP's mission is to provide leadership and encouraging partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and people to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

The role of the UNEP is assessing global, regional, and national environmental conditions and trends and addresses various issues such as:

- Climate change including the territorial approach to climate change (TACC).
- Disasters and conflicts
- Ecosystem management
- Environmental governance
- harmful substances
- resource efficiency
- biosafety

Definitions of Key Terms:

1. Endangered Species:

Endangered species, any species that is at risk of extinction because of a sudden rapid decrease in its population or a loss of its critical habitat. Previously, any species of plant or animal that was threatened with extinction could be called an endangered species. The need for separate definitions of “endangered” and “threatened” species resulted in the development of various categorization systems, each containing definitions and criteria by which a species can be classified according to its risk of extinction. As a rule, a range of criteria must be analysed before a species can be placed in one category or another.

2. Ecosystems:

The simplest definition of an ecosystem is that it is a community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment. For instance, tropical forests are ecosystems made up of living beings such as trees, plants, animals, insects and microorganisms that are in constant interaction between themselves and that are affected by other physical (sun, temperature) or chemical (oxygen or nutrients) components.

3. Poaching:

Poaching, in law, the illegal shooting, trapping, or taking of game, fish, or plants from private property or from a place where such practices are specially reserved or forbidden. Poaching is a major existential threat to numerous wild organisms worldwide and is an important contributor to biodiversity loss.

4. Biodiversity:

Biodiversity describes the richness and variety of life on earth. It is the most complex and important feature of our planet. Without biodiversity, life would not sustain.

It is important in natural as well as artificial ecosystems. It deals with nature’s variety, the biosphere. It refers to variabilities among plants, animals and microorganism species. Biodiversity includes the number of different organisms and their relative frequencies in an ecosystem.

5. Wildlife Trade Hotspot :

There are certain places in the world where wildlife trade is particularly threatening or where targeted action would be particularly worthwhile. These places are sometimes called 'wildlife trade hotspots' and include, for example, China's international borders and the eastern borders of the European Union.

6. Biodiversity Hotspot:

A biodiversity hotspot is an area with a relatively high biodiversity value. The idea of defining hotspots is generally credited to the ecologist Norman Myers, who suggested that global conservation efforts should be concentrated in areas where there were high numbers of endemic species and the threat to those species was high. The reasoning behind this approach is that the most cost effective way of reducing species extinctions is to focus resources on saving centres of threatened endemic species.

Introduction to the Agenda:

What is Wildlife Trafficking?

Wildlife trafficking involves the illegal trade, smuggling, poaching, capture, or collection of endangered species, protected wildlife (including animals or plants that are protected by government regulations such as quotas and natural reserves), by-products or products thereof. The main reason for the illegal wildlife trafficking is the rapidly expanding demand for a variety of products across the world that are derived from them. This includes exotic pets, trinkets, ingredients for traditional Chinese medicine, bushmeat, jewelry, objects such as chess sets as well as the furs of animals for a variety of reasons such as coats, trophies and even costumes. On World Wildlife Day, 3 March 2016, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that animal poaching increased by an astounding 8,000% in the past seven years. It raises a profit estimated between \$10 and \$23 billion annually and is the fifth most profitable illegitimate trade globally.

UNEP notes that due to this increased trade in wildlife, not only harms the environment and threatens biodiversity through the extinction of some of the most fragile species, but also has a negative impact on social and economic development. Along with being unethical, it is also unsustainable as it affects the livelihoods and economies of local communities which depend on tourism and biodiversity for their survival. Biodiversity loss is one of the greatest global threats in our time. Furthermore, low biodiversity means a narrower genetic pool, making existing species less resilient to resist diseases of any kind.

Illegal trafficking of wildlife hinders the achievement of SDGs 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Countries with highest numbers of Illegal Wildlife Trafficking:

China- the chinese market is the biggest importer of illegal wildlife products and its demands act as an enormous force in the global trade of endangered species. In recent times, farms in China have grown to not only include animals such as pigs, cows, and chickens but also tigers, bears, and rhinos, all for wildlife trafficking.

Kenya- Extremely well known for its elephant trade network with ivory and rhino horns being in great demand.

Tanzania- Has a large problem with wildlife trafficking. It is believed that the majority of ivory and pangolin scales are trafficked by sea.

Uganda- One of the most common movement and transportation points in wildlife trafficking in the Central and East African region. Ugandan criminal organizations have been constantly smuggling ivory for years.

South Africa- This country has the benefit of gathering illegal wildlife products from surrounding countries such as Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland and is hence a large hub for smuggling of wildlife. South Africa is a place where we can often find not only poachers and traffickers but also consumers.

How wildlife trafficking works:

Wildlife trafficking trade has routes extending to every continent. It happens in a similar way to illegal drugs and weapon trafficking. A major source is the Internet's deep web and dark web. It can also take place on auction sites via classified ads. Products are often available on eBay. Lastly, the air travel system, alongside land and sea carries, also enables wildlife trafficking when products are hidden in luggage and Carry-ons.

Current Global Actions:

UNEP, together with other United Nations agencies, governments, international organizations and the private sector, is working to raise awareness, enforce laws and enlisting the support of local communities to stop the illegal trade in wildlife.

UNEP advocates for an end to illegal wildlife trade globally

Globally, corruption is a serious obstacle while combating illegal wildlife trafficking. UNEP tries to overcome this obstacle by providing support through training of judges, law enforcement and custom officials on the topic of wildlife crime and developing rule of law.

Public awareness is raised through its “*Wild for Life*” campaign which informs people about the social, economic and environmental impacts of wildlife trafficking. It does this with the help of famous influencers, who can reach one billion people through their social media channels.

UNEP supports conservation of the world’s biodiverse habitats

Habitat loss is one of the major reasons behind biodiversity loss. Habitat destruction can also increase the exposure of humans to zoonotic diseases (illnesses that arise from human contact with animals). This is why UNEP works towards strengthening the scientific evidence base for policymakers.

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

Many species are becoming endangered because of international trade. Cites is an international agreement between governments to address this problem. Governments sign up to CITES voluntarily and have to write their own national laws to support its aims. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It does not require countries to make illegal wildlife trade a criminal offence. Covered by CITES are threatened species from elephants to turtles, orchids to mahogany. CITES has dramatically reduced the trade in endangered species of both live animal imports (e.g. tortoises) or animal parts (e.g. elephant tusk, rhino horn). Currently there are 183 Parties.

Through a collaborative initiative, UNEP and the CITES Secretariat help countries and territories, upon their request, strengthen their environmental governance to meet CITES requirements to combat illegal trade in wildlife. This is done by designating at least one Management Authority and one Scientific Authority; prohibiting trade in specimens in violation of the Convention; penalizing illegal trade; and confiscating specimens illegally possessed. The species are grouped in the CITES Appendices according to how threatened they are by international trade.

Appendix 1- species cannot be traded internationally as they are threatened with extinction.

Appendix 2- species can be traded internationally but within strict regulations ensuring their sustainability.

Appendix 3- a species included at the request of a country which then needs the cooperation of other countries to help prevent illegal exploitation.

The appendices include some whole groups, such as primates, cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), sea turtles, parrots, corals, cacti and orchids and many separate species or populations. It is a great example of what can be done voluntarily to conserve species. About 5,000 animal species and 28,000 plant species are on the lists. Since 1975, it has been one of the most effective international wildlife conservation agreements in the world.

Special focus on India:

Introduction to wildlife trafficking in India-

Wildlife trafficking has been an ongoing and prevailing issue in India for several years. In India, it includes diverse products including mongoose hair; snake skins; Rhino horn; Tiger and Leopard claws, bones, skins, whiskers; Elephant tusks; deer antlers; shahtoosh shawl; turtle shells; musk pods; bear bile; medicinal plants; timber and caged birds such as parakeets, mynas, munias etc. A large part of this trade is meant for the international market and has no direct demand in India. India is among the top 20 countries for the illegal wildlife trade and its fast expanding airport sector is often used by wildlife traffickers to smuggle high-end, high-value species and products.

“A huge global demand for our flora and fauna is a major cause for illegal wildlife trade by ruthless cross-border smugglers,” says Tilotama Varma, Additional Director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of India.

Some prominent areas in India for wildlife trafficking-

Delhi, Sunderbans and the Western Ghats are among the hotspots of illegal trade of tigers, their parts and products. The other four hotspots were close to protected areas in different parts of the country — Ramnagar in Uttar Pradesh which sits close to the entrance of Corbett National Park, the towns of Balgahat and Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh where the Kanha and Pench National Park is located, Kolkata and areas spanning south to the edge of the Sunderbans in Bengal and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in the Western Ghats. The National Capital Region is an “exception among the hotspots” as it is not located in or near to any tiger landscapes.

Regulation in India regarding wildlife trafficking-

India has a strong legal and policy framework to regulate and restrict wildlife trade. Trade in over 1800 species of wild animals, plants and their derivatives is prohibited under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

India has been a member of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora) since 1976. CITES is an international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. CITES works by subjecting international trade in specimens of selected species listed on Appendices to certain controls.

In India like many other countries, the problem is not the laws but that these may be poorly communicated and just as poorly implemented and enforced. Often, positive efforts to address wildlife trade concerns are undermined by lack of political will and governance failures. Without political backing, disincentives for over-exploitation and illegal trade, such as penalties for legal infringements, are all too often weak.

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

It is the principle act dealing with wildlife protection in India. It was enacted by the Union Parliament with a view to improve the protection provided to wild animals since the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, 1912 had become completely outdated and punishments were no longer commensurate with the offences. In 1972, the matter pertaining to wildlife being in State List in the seventh schedule was found to be outside the purview of the Union Parliament but in accordance with Article 252 of the Constitution. Therefore, the legislatures of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal resolved to empower the Union Parliament to pass the Wildlife (Protection) Bill, which after receiving the assent of the President came to be known as the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

It provides for the conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of its components, fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological resources, knowledge and for matters connected therewith. A foreigner is required to take approval from the National Biodiversity Board and an Indian citizen needs to take a similar approval from the State Biodiversity Board to obtain a biological resource for commercial utilization. If a foreigner obtains a biological resource for commercial utilization without the approval, the punishment amounts to a five-year jail term or a fine of Rs 10 lakhs or both, while in case of an Indian citizen the punishment is a three-year jail term or a fine of Rs 5 lakhs (approx. USD7750) or both. Noticeably, any such attempt or abetment is also an offence carrying the same punishment as the Act itself.

Past history:

A Brief History of Regulating International Wildlife Trade

1900- Signing of the “Convention Designed to Ensure the Conservation of various species of wild animals in Africa, which are useful to Man or inoffensive” to regulate wildlife trade of African Species. Hailed as the first international treaty on nature conservation, however it never came into force.

1936- The “Convention Relative to the Preservation of Fauna and Flora in their Natural State” came into force. Also known as the “London Convention”. Its primary aim was to protect African species by prohibiting hunting, killing, and capture, and by regulating internal and international trade.

1948- Creation of **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature)

1961- WWF (World Wildlife Fund) set up by IUCN and Julian Huxley.

1973- CITES (Convention on the International Trade of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora) was established.

2008- INTERPOL started coordinating several operations targeting the illegal trade in wildlife.

Project Wisdom was founded to investigate and dismantle major environmental crime networks and infrastructure. The purpose of Project Wisdom is to cooperate and collaborate with local law enforcement, to support them and provide information exchange. It ensures that community voices are supported and strengthened by recognizing the importance of community and local enforcement participation in the decision-making process.

2015- Operation Worthy II by INTERPOL to target ivory trafficking in Africa. A **symposium** held by the Centre for Energy, Environment and Sustainability, Sustainable Livelihoods Specialist Group, and the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED) on World Wildlife Day to address the severe rise in wildlife trafficking in 2015. The IIED “**Theory of Change**” focuses on solutions coming from the bottom up, which are grounded in local context and owned and driven by local people.

Guiding questions

1. What measures can be taken to incentivize people and governments to protect species?
2. How to raise awareness about the plight of the world's wildlife?
3. How to dismantle wildlife trafficking networks that drive the illegal hunting and illegal trade of endangered, threatened, or otherwise protected species?
4. How to create stricter domestic trade regulations?
5. How to regulate undocumented species being traded legally?
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of the current laws around Wildlife trafficking.

Videos for extra understanding:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9A2oVhUZNU>

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