

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



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TRANSNATIONAL ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY TO COMBAT TIGER CRIME

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INTERPOL

**TRANSNATIONAL
ENFORCEMENT
STRATEGY TO
COMBAT TIGER
CRIME**

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Introduction

In November 2015, 23 senior law enforcement officers from 10 tiger range countries and partner organizations met at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore. The meeting provided a platform to discuss tiger crime enforcement challenges at the management level in range countries. It was organized by INTERPOL with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the CITES Secretariat.

A key outcome of the workshop was the development of a common transnational strategy for the management of tiger crime, and the commitment that the strategy will be institutionalized to facilitate intelligence-led operational efforts. Non-governmental organizations attending the meeting also committed to provide support to law enforcement.

Limitations

The commitments listed in this document are not binding but are recommendations for respective countries to implement depending on relevance, capabilities and resources. It is up to the countries and partner organizations to implement them, taking into consideration their laws and policies as well as international commitments.

Three tiger range countries, Cambodia, Russia and China could not participate in the meeting. Enforcement agencies in these countries are requested to consider adopting this strategy as far as possible, to ensure uniformity across all the tiger range countries.

Background

Iconic Asian wildlife species such as the tiger, leopard, elephant, rhinoceros, and other lesser known species such as pangolins and turtles face a high risk of extinction due to the demand for the species, their parts and derivatives and the high prices that they command in the international black market. Already vulnerable, these species will not be able to absorb the losses from continued illegal exploitation.

The tiger is probably the most vulnerable to immediate extinction. Over the last century, tigers were hunted widely as trophies, pests or ingredients for traditional medicines. This resulted in a sharp decline in the tiger population and extinction of three of the nine sub-species. Presently, there are only a few thousand tigers spread over small, fragmented habitats in 13 range countries in Asia: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Given its critical conservation status, the tiger was listed in Appendix I of the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and all international commercial trade in tigers, tiger parts or derivatives has been prohibited since 1978.

Starting with commitments under CITES in the early 1990's, politically reinforced with the St Petersburg Declaration in 2010, the international community has made several commitments to combat crimes against tigers to help ensure their survival in the wild.

Despite the absolute ban on trade and international commitments, tigers continue to be illegally exploited. The illicit trafficking of tigers, controlled by organized criminals operating across countries and continents makes it impossible for any country to tackle the crime alone.

Executive Level Meeting on Tiger Crime

Recognizing the need to reinforce existing commitments and the urgency to translate political will into tactical enforcement action, INTERPOL invited senior level managers from key enforcement agencies in range countries to come together and discuss the challenges faced and opportunities to address tiger crime.

The primary objectives of this meeting were to:

- Reinforce executive level commitment;
- Institutionalize enforcement responses;
- Stimulate strategic dialogue between all key stakeholders;
- Commit to law enforcement collaboration.

The meeting was attended by law enforcement officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam.

Partner organizations that attended the meeting were the CITES Secretariat, the Global Tiger Initiative Council, TRAFFIC, Panthera, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), the Wildlife Protection Society of India, the Global Tiger Forum and Freeland Foundation.



Identification of Problems and Needs

During the meeting, participants were encouraged to work together to develop a uniform transnational strategy to enhance enforcement in relation to tiger crime.

Each country representative was asked to identify the challenges or obstacles in wildlife enforcement and to identify strategies to address these. Across the range countries, the primary obstacles identified included the following:

- Lack of multi-agency collaboration or coordination;
- Insufficient data sharing at the national and transnational level;
- Lack of awareness of the crime at the management level;
- Inadequate investigative and analytical capabilities.

Resource needs identified included the need for more specialist enforcement officers, financial resources, centralized data storing system and access to better technology and forensic tools.

NGOs and other partners were requested to provide a brief update on the work that they are doing and the ways in which they can support the enforcement agencies in range countries.

Based on this information, the participants worked in groups to identify the commitments required in 3 primary categories:

- Strategic commitments;
- Operational commitments;
- Tactical commitments.

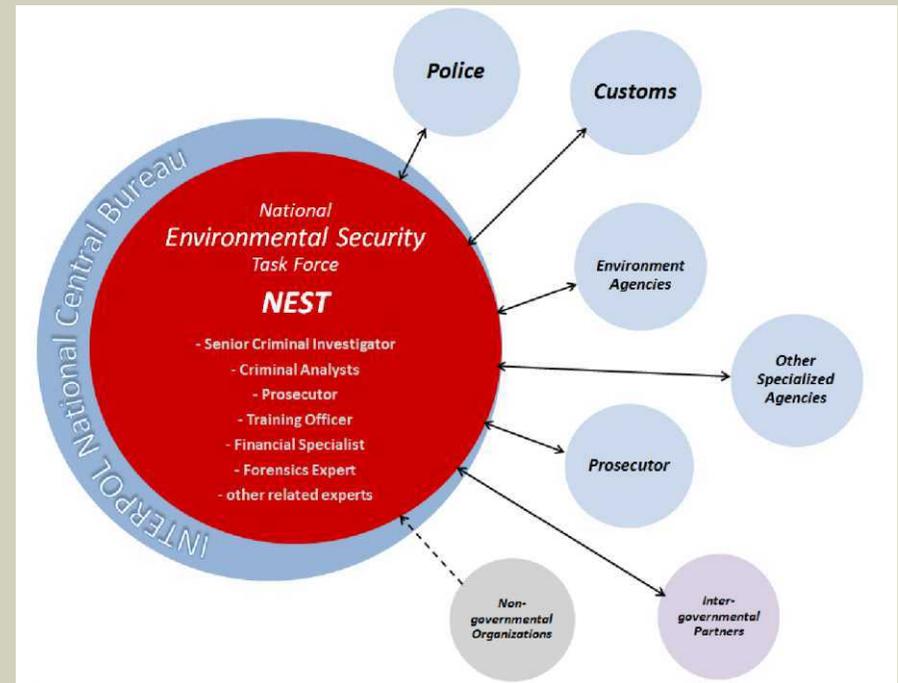
Commitments

Strategic Commitments

- Reaffirm commitment to implement existing international agreements;
- Strengthen commitment at the senior management level to ensure that officers on the ground have the support of their management and the authorisation and/or resources for tactical operations;
- Invest in awareness building and advocacy strategies to educate not only the public, but also decision makers about the severity of the crime and its impacts;
- Strengthen wildlife legislation to have a deterrent on wildlife criminals;
- Explore bilateral/multi-lateral agreements to enhance collaboration;
- Hold an annual meeting of executive level managers from tiger range countries to review progress and identify future directions.

Operational Commitments:

- Engage with all known source, transit and demand countries to eliminate the demand and supply chain for tiger products;
- Work closely with regional and international organizations to ensure transnational cooperation and collaboration on wildlife crime;
- Adopt a multi-agency approach at the national level, bringing together all enforcement agencies that work on wildlife crime, such as the INTERPOL NEST model (National Environmental Security Taskforce);



- Appoint one national level *Operational Manager* in tiger range countries to act as the liaison point with the multi-agency body (NEST) on all transnational cases and investigations;
- Conduct regular social media monitoring;
- Identify priority capacity building needs;
- Facilitate information sharing nationally and transnationally, as far as possible, under national laws and policies. Data sharing agreements may be formalized where necessary;
- Prioritise information analysis and the creation of a centralised platform with information from all range countries;
- Develop cross-border enforcement strategies for protected tiger habitats stretching across international borders;
- Identify best practices that can be shared during the annual meeting of the executive level managers from tiger range countries.

Tactical Commitments:

- Regular communication and real time information sharing nationally and transnationally;
- Prioritize information analysis and sharing of intelligence to support targeted operations;
- Joint investigations and deployment of multi-agency operational teams, when necessary;
- Use of modern technology to assist enforcement authorities undertaking surveillance, interdiction, identification of species and intelligence collection and analysis;
- Build investigative and analytical capacity, as well as specialized skills in areas such as financial or cyber investigations, and controlled deliveries;
- Work closely with local communities to obtain intelligence and develop and foster an informant network;
- Investigate and prosecute offenders for other related crimes such as firearms offences, corruption, money laundering, violence and tax evasion.



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Next Steps:

INTERPOL:

- INTERPOL will send a formal request to share information on tiger crime to all member countries and partner organizations;
- INTERPOL, with the support of ICCWC and other partner organizations will develop a list of all existing international commitments;
- INTERPOL, with the support of ICCWC and other partner organizations will develop a list of all existing tools and services that can be used by member countries to enforce tiger crime laws;
- INTERPOL will organize a number of follow-up tactical regional investigative meetings in range countries to identify operational targets and plan intelligence-led transnational investigations of criminals and syndicates;
- At the suggestion of range countries, INTERPOL will consider proposing a resolution in the next INTERPOL General Assembly to institutionalise training on wildlife crime by incorporating it in the curriculum in national police training academies.

Tiger range countries:

- Share information with INTERPOL and other range countries on tiger crime;
- Participate in upcoming tactical regional investigative meetings and the intelligence-led transnational investigations resulting from these meetings;
- Appoint a national operational manager who will act as the primary liaison officer for the country;
- Identify priority training needs;

- Request extension of access to INTERPOL databases where appropriate.

Partner organizations:

- Sharing intelligence with INTERPOL and tiger range countries;
- Support target development and analysis;
- Provide a list of training courses that they can deliver, and in which countries and languages.



For more information contact Project Predator at environmentalcrime@interpol.int