

## Secretariat's mission to Singapore

The Secretariat conducted a mission on 28 and 29 April 2017, back to back with the CITES Tortoise and Freshwater Turtles Task Force meeting. The Secretariat would like to thank the Government of the United States of America for the generous funding it provided, which enabled the Secretariat to undertake this mission.

To facilitate the Secretariat's mission, the CITES Management Authority of Singapore, the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA), developed a programme which enabled the Secretariat to meet with key national agencies, which included the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority, Singapore Customs, the Attorney-General's Chambers, the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority of Singapore, the Ministry of National Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Secretariat also conducted a number of site visits to land and sea checkpoints.

Singapore is identified by the ETIS report prepared for CoP17 [in the Annex to document CoP17 Doc. 57.6 (Rev. 1)] as a Party that serves as transit country in the illegal ivory trade chain. It is observed in the report that Singapore could focus upon risk assessment, gathering intelligence, targeting containerized sea and air cargo moving between Africa and prominent destination locations in Asia. The use of controlled deliveries and sniffer dogs were highlighted as another important consideration for supporting effective law enforcement.

The findings made during the mission of the Secretariat are relevant to the above observations made in the ETIS report.

In relation to Step 1 b) of the *Guidelines to the National Ivory Action Plan Process* [Annex 3 of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP17)], Singapore submitted a report on additional information to be considered by the Secretariat in developing its recommendation to the Standing Committee. Singapore highlighted a number of ongoing and planned activities and initiatives, such as:

- Follow up of the outcomes of work done by the Centre for Advanced Defense Studies (C4ADS) and INTERPOL, commissioned by Singapore, to deepen its understanding of high risk shipping companies and traffickers involved in the illicit global ivory trade chain;
- Activities planned for 2017 to build capacity amongst officers in the use of controlled deliveries;
- Consideration of the feasibility of implementing measures or activities identified through a study visit to the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department from 24-26 January 2017; and
- Provision of training for the transport sector, such as freight forwarders and logistics companies, to assist them in adopting measures to ensure that they are not involved or implicated in the illegal trade in ivory and other wildlife.

Equally, the findings made during the mission of the Secretariat are relevant to these activities and initiatives reported upon by Singapore.

### **Findings of the Secretariat's mission**

#### National inter-agency cooperation

Singapore has put in place a whole-of-government approach to address wildlife crime, including ivory trafficking. The aim of this approach is to facilitate a comprehensive and cohesive response to wildlife crime through engagement by all national governmental agencies with a role in combating it. The approach is implemented through an Inter-Agency Committee. This Committee incorporates representatives from all key national agencies with a role in combatting wildlife crime, and establishes a contact point within each of these agencies for reporting and information sharing. Through the Inter-

Agency Committee, national agencies work alongside one another, each leveraging on their respective domain expertise to collectively ensure as well as improve the effectiveness of detection means and enforcement measures.

AVA is Singapore's lead national agency dealing with illegal trade in wildlife and in implementing its mandate, it works in close cooperation with Singapore Customs and the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, the agencies responsible for controlling land, air and sea checkpoints.

During the site visits it was confirmed by different authorities that wildlife trafficking remains one of Singapore's key focus areas, included as a priority in their work plans along with other serious crimes such as drug trafficking.

#### Risk management practices

As a consequence of its geographical location, Singapore is one of the world's key transport hubs. In terms of shipping tonnage for example, Singapore is one of the busiest ports in the world. More than 130,000 vessels visit its port annually, and in 2015, the port of Singapore handled more than 30 million twenty-foot equivalent units of cargo.

Given the high volume of travellers and cargo passing through it on daily basis, Singapore relies heavily on risk assessment and profiling to detect illegal trade in wildlife. Singapore has developed indicators for risk profiling, which include, *inter alia*, a focus on targeting passengers and cargo *en route* from and to key countries identified as country of origin or destination for illegal wildlife consignments.

Good risk management practices are essential for any country that serve as a key transport hub. In this regard it is important to note that Singapore is actively and constantly working to adapt and improve existing risk profiles and indicators by collecting information and reviewing trafficking trends, to ensure that risk profiles and indicators remain current and are adapted in a timely manner to respond to any newly identified trends. During the mission, Singapore clarified that the work done by C4ADS and INTERPOL, as mentioned in its report was requested with the primary purpose of further strengthening existing risk assessment capacity. At the time of the mission, Singapore indicated that it was in the process of reviewing the results of the work done by C4ADS, whilst the work being done by INTERPOL was still ongoing.

Singapore deplores the fact that when seizures implicating it are made elsewhere in the world, the Parties making the seizures often do not inform Singapore, which relies on such information to further strengthen its risk profiling.

#### International cooperation and intelligence-driven law enforcement responses

Singapore actively participates in, and interacts with other countries through, international forums and platforms such as the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime, ASEAN Working Group on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement, the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group, INTERPOL Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings and Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement Group meetings organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It has also participated in multiple law enforcement operations to combat illegal trade in wildlife, initiated at international level in recent years.

Singapore deploys an action-orientated approach to intelligence reports received, and acts upon any credible, timely and actionable intelligence reports or tip-offs received from governmental agencies, the public or others. Authorities indicated that when credible intelligence that contains sufficient information is received after an illegal shipment has left its ports, such intelligence is channeled to authorities in countries to which the illegal consignment is destined, for action to be taken. In May 2015, Singapore seized a shipment of 4600 kg of raw ivory destined to Viet Nam, following a tip-off by authorities in Kenya. The report submitted by Singapore in relation to Step 1 b) of the *Guidelines to the National Ivory Action Plan Process* and made available to the Standing Committee during the postal procedure to implement the provisions of Step 1 paragraphs d) and e) of the Guidelines, included an annex providing information on other seizures made by authorities in Singapore, on the basis of intelligence received and risk assessments.

### Passenger and cargo screening

Singapore is a well-developed country with access to cutting-edge technologies. In The Global Innovation Index 2016, jointly released by Cornell University, Institut Européen d'Administration des Affaires and the World Intellectual Property Organization, Singapore is the highest ranking Asian country. This innovation is also visible within its law enforcement community, and its authorities have access to modern technologies and state of the art equipment, to assist them in detecting and responding to all crime, including wildlife crime and ivory trafficking. In addition to this, officers operating the equipment receive through training before being deployed, and are subjected to further more specialized training during the course of their careers. Through a combination of training and hands on experience, together with access to well trained and experienced supervisory staff, these officers are highly skilled and fully competent to perform the duties assigned to them.

Singapore uses a layered screening approach, and a combination of intrusive and non-intrusive methods to detect illegal activities. This could for example include risk profiling, non-intrusive scans, physical inspection, lab analysis, or a combination of these, depending on prevailing circumstances. As a result, not all screening may be obvious.

In meetings and site visits during the mission, the different authorities involved provided detailed information to the Secretariat, most of which was also witnessed first-hand, on risk profiling, scanning and checks at land checkpoints, air passenger screening, check-in and carry-on baggage screening, air and sea cargo screening, and controls on legal trade in CITES-listed species. The measures implemented are comprehensive and thorough and often include for example 100% scanning and different layers of risk profiling. Due to the nature of this information, it will however not be appropriate for the Secretariat to disclose these measures in more detail.

### Use of controlled deliveries

To date, one successful controlled delivery was conducted by Singapore. This was however a domestic controlled delivery involving corals illegally imported from the Philippines, and initially detected through scanning. Singapore continues its work on controlled deliveries, to build capacity amongst officers in the use of this technique. To effectively deploy a controlled delivery however requires the correct circumstances to prevail, and Singapore continues to work closely with INTERPOL, to identify suitable opportunities to pilot action in this regard at international level. Singapore advised the Secretariat that it would be partnering UNODC to conduct an advanced training course on 'Controlled Delivery and Surveillance to Investigate Wildlife Trafficking' from 25-28 July 2017.<sup>1</sup>

### Follow up to study visit to Hong Kong

AVA confirmed that, to follow up a study visit to the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in January 2017, Singapore was assessing the feasibility of training and deploying sniffer dogs to combat wildlife crime.

Singapore also informed the Secretariat of its plan for legislating a domestic ban on ivory trade and in this regard acknowledged Hong Kong's role in sharing relevant experience.

### Awareness raising

Singapore informed the Secretariat that all significant seizures and subsequent prosecutions are publicized in mainstream media and on governmental social media platforms. Pamphlets have also been developed and are being used to raise awareness amongst the public about CITES requirements and illegal trade.

Singapore also highlighted the ivory crush event it held on 13 June 2016, indicating that this event was widely publicized to raise awareness of illegal ivory trade and the importance of combating it.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/2017/07/illegal-wildlife-trade-singapore/story.html?utm\\_content=buffer5f6a0&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=linkedin.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/2017/07/illegal-wildlife-trade-singapore/story.html?utm_content=buffer5f6a0&utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

## Training for the transport sector

After the mission, Singapore informed the Secretariat that it had organized a training session for freight forwarders on 5 July 2017. The aim of the session was to raise awareness amongst freight forwarders so that they could play a more proactive role in combating illegal wildlife trade. The session is reported to have included topics on background on CITES, legislative powers, CITES permit requirements, enforcement activities, what a CITES permit should look like and tell-tale signs of illegal consignments and their role in the fight against illegal wildlife trade. Singapore reported that it is planning further activities in of this type in future, including annual training sessions for local traders and freight forwarders and annual distribution of circulars to freight forwarders on how they can contribute to fighting illegal wildlife trade.

## Conclusions

Large volumes of people and goods moving across borders increasingly pose a challenge to authorities around the globe. Singapore is no exception. To effectively secure borders and prevent undesirable persons and goods from entering or passing through national territories, whilst at the same time facilitating the legitimate movement of large volumes of people and goods, authorities increasingly need to deploy and rely upon good risk management practices to identify suspicious persons and cargo. This together with good legislation, well-established strategies and protocol, intelligence networks, intelligence-driven enforcement responses, detection equipment, well-trained and professional officers, and strong collaboration with counterparts in other countries, are essential for countries that serve as transit hubs.

The ETIS report identifies Singapore as a “Party of primary concern”, and states that illegal ivory consignments through Singapore have grown far more prominent in the period 2012-2014. Singapore is however one of the busiest transit hubs in the world, and the Party’s prominence in the ETIS report may be due to its role as a major transit hub, and less as a reflection of any lack of response to illegal ivory consignments by the Party.

Singapore is a country governed by strong rule of law. It was ranked ninth in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2016 and first for the Regulatory Enforcement factor, which is the component that measures the degree to which countries fairly and effectively implement and enforce their regulations.

Singapore has put in place a whole-of-government approach to address wildlife crime, including illegal trade in ivory. This whole-of-government approach enables different departments to work together effectively, to deliver a well-coordinated law enforcement response at multiple levels. What was striking and is highly commendable, is the consistent response to illegal trade in wildlife taken by different agencies at national level, as observed by the Secretariat during its mission. Whether at land, air or sea checkpoints, the front line operational activities conducted by authorities reflect that the whole-of-government approach is actively pursued and consistently implemented. Different national agencies with different mandates are well aware of the issue of wildlife crime and actively working to combat it. Activities are conducted by drawing upon well-established strategies and protocol, which enables authorities to respond in a thorough, systematic, and coordinated manner, drawing upon a well-developed risk assessment framework and modern technology, including state of the art scanning equipment, to detect and respond to all crime, including wildlife crime and ivory trafficking.

The Secretariat’s observations and findings are that Singapore has implemented and continues to implement a wide variety of measures to combat wildlife crime, including illegal ivory trade. These measures also respond to the observations made in the ETIS report prepared for CoP17, and the measures suggested to combat illegal ivory trade, are already in place in Singapore.

In the case of Singapore, as a Party that serves almost exclusively as transit country in the illegal ivory trade chain, the Secretariat believes that it is unlikely that requesting the Party to develop and implement a NIAP will have any significant impact beyond the measures that the Party has already put in place.