

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



Seventy-fourth meeting of the Standing Committee
Lyon (France), 7 - 11 March 2022

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

Enforcement matters

WILDLIFE CRIME LINKED TO THE INTERNET:
REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.
2. At its 18th meeting (CoP18, Geneva, 2019), the Conference of the Parties adopted Decisions 18.81 to 18.85 on *Wildlife crime linked to the Internet*, as follows:

Directed to Parties

- 18.81** *Parties are encouraged to, as may be needed, draw upon the capacity established at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, for advice and assistance in their efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet.*
- 18.82** *Parties are encouraged to, as may be needed, make full use of the guidelines developed by INTERPOL, on how to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet, in their investigation of cases of wildlife crime linked to the Internet.*
- 18.83** *All Parties should:*
- a) *inform the Secretariat in the event that any changes that pertain to wildlife crime linked to the Internet are made to their national legislation, as well as of any other relevant domestic measures;*
 - b) *submit information to the Secretariat on websites adhering to codes of conduct to address and prevent illegal trade in wildlife;*
 - c) *inform the Secretariat of any best practice models that pertain to regulation of online marketplaces and social media platforms;*
 - d) *publish the results of scientific research on the correlations between use of the Internet and the rate of wildlife crime, and communicate these results to the Secretariat; and*
 - e) *inform the Secretariat of any trends in wildlife crime linked to the Internet identified, including any changes in trade routes and methods of shipment that have been observed.*

Directed to the Secretariat

18.84 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *continue the engagement with its partners in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), regarding best practices and model domestic measures for addressing wildlife crime linked to the Internet; and*
- b) *share on the Wildlife crime linked to the Internet webpage on the CITES website, as appropriate, information received from Parties in accordance with Decision 18.83, ICCWC partner agencies in accordance with Decision 18.84, paragraph a), and other relevant organizations or experts, regarding measures and activities implemented to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet.*
- c) *amend all relevant Resolutions and Decisions to ensure consistent use of the term 'wildlife crime linked to the internet' with regard to reference to combating wildlife cybercrime and include as appropriate this terminology on the CITES glossary and the new webpage on Wildlife crime linked to the internet on the CITES website.*

18.85 *The Secretariat shall report on the implementation of Decisions 18.83 and 18.84 to the Standing Committee, and subsequently to the Conference of the Parties at its 19th meeting.*

3. The present document provides information on activities conducted regarding the implementation of the Decisions outlined in paragraph 2 above.

Implementation of Decision 18.81

4. Decision 18.81 encourages Parties to draw upon the capacity established at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, for advice and assistance in their efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet. Notification to the Parties [No. 2019/042](#) of 8 August 2019 provides information on how Parties can access this resource.
5. In February 2021, INTERPOL informed the Secretariat that the use of this resource by CITES Parties had been limited across 2020. In November 2021, INTERPOL indicated that the resource continued to be underutilized, but also confirmed that it will remain available to Parties. Parties are therefore encouraged to make use of this resource in support of their investigations and efforts related to combating wildlife crime linked to the Internet.
6. INTERPOL also informed the Secretariat that it is working to develop a global report on best practices to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet, providing targeted support through capacity-building activities and training on, *inter alia*, the INTERPOL [Wildlife Crime Linked to the Internet - Practical Guidelines for Law Enforcement Practitioners](#), and continuing to support targeted activities in global and regional ICCWC-supported law enforcement operations and activities.

Implementation of Decision 18.82

7. The INTERPOL guidelines entitled '[Wildlife Crime Linked to the Internet: Practical Guidelines for Law Enforcement Practitioners](#)' were finalized and published in March 2020. Since November 2021, the guidelines are available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. The guidelines provide a practical tool for law enforcement officers on how to investigate cases of wildlife crime linked to the Internet. They cover matters such as concepts related to the technology used for online investigations; how to identify wildlife crime linked to the Internet; disrupting wildlife crime linked to the Internet; analysing content; and modern police investigation techniques. The guidelines document is a restricted document available to law enforcement authorities only, upon request via their respective INTERPOL National Central Bureaux.

Implementation of Decision 18.83 and 18.84, paragraphs a) and b)

8. The Secretariat issued [Notification to the Parties No. 2020/031](#) of 1 April 2020 inviting Parties to submit information to the Secretariat as anticipated by Decision 18.83. Responses were received from Cambodia, Canada, China, the European Union (EU), Malta, New Zealand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

9. As required by Decision 18.84, the Secretariat also reached out to ICCWC partners in March 2020 and March 2021 to request information on best practices and model measures to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet. Input received from Parties in response to the Notification and from ICCWC partners has been included on the [Wildlife crime linked to the Internet](#) webpage available on the CITES Secretariat website.
10. To implement Decision 18.84, paragraph b), the Secretariat prepared summary documents in August 2019 and August 2021, highlighting the key matters outlined in information received from Parties, ICCWC partner agencies and other relevant organizations or experts. These summary documents were made available to Parties on the [Wildlife crime linked to the Internet](#) webpage, under the heading *Measures and activities implemented to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet*. The Secretariat continues to welcome additional information and will include it on the webpage as appropriate.
11. Further, the Secretariat participated in and contributed to a series of training webinars organized in 2020 in the context of the EU Wildlife Cybercrime project.¹ These webinars, targeting primarily EU law enforcement agencies and CITES Management Authorities, were convened to support EU law enforcement actions to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet. The series was composed of six modules to provide the trainees with a comprehensive understanding of how to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet.² The Secretariat also participated in project activities in 2021 that included an online multi-stakeholder workshop to bring relevant shareholders together to discuss how to enhance the collaborative responses to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet.
12. In addition, the Secretariat contributed to a number of events with a focus on combating wildlife crime linked to the Internet. This included an event to celebrate the second anniversary of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online organized alongside World Wildlife Day in March 2020,³ and the annual meeting of the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online held in China on 20 October 2020. The Secretariat also highlighted *inter alia* the importance of combating wildlife crime linked to the Internet at a side event on 'Wildlife Crime in the Spotlight: Recent Trends and Policy Implications' organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on 12 October 2020, alongside the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. At the request of Peru, the Secretariat also moderated an online national workshop on crimes against wildlife linked to the Internet, convened in September 2021 to identify key issues and areas for collaboration amongst institutions to enhance the national response to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet.
13. Further, UNODC has been conducting training courses on tactical online investigations, which included trainings on wildlife online investigations for law enforcement officers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (September 2019 and April 2021) and Malaysia (February 2020). UNODC also plans to launch a series of advanced online investigation training courses for the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam. In addition, UNODC has provided substantive support to enhance digital investigations and digital forensics. This included mentorships for Cambodia, China and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as well as the provision of equipment to conduct digital forensic investigations for Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Implementation of Decision 18.84, paragraph c)

14. As required by Decision 18.84, paragraph c), the Secretariat updated the [CITES Glossary](#) to include terminology related to wildlife crime linked to the Internet.⁴ The Secretariat also incorporated this in the webpage on *Wildlife crime linked to the internet* on the CITES website, as required by the Decision.
15. The Secretariat in document [SC73 Doc. 16](#) on *Review of Resolutions and Decisions*, reported to the Standing Committee regarding the amendment of all relevant Resolutions and Decisions to ensure consistent use of the term 'wildlife crime linked to the internet', as required by Decision 18.84, paragraph c).

¹ *The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and CITES Management Authorities in the EU regarding tackling wildlife crime linked to the internet.*

² *Training modules included training on: overview of the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations and link to online trafficking; Wildlife Crime Internet Monitoring and Cyber patrolling; Online investigations; the INTERPOL's Guidelines Wildlife Crime Linked to the Internet: Practical Guidelines for Law Enforcement Practitioners; Digital Forensics on open web; and Dark web and Virtual Assets.*

³ https://cites.org/eng/CITES_SG_Remarks_at_the_reception_of_the_Coalition_to_End_Wildlife_Trafficking_Online_03032020

⁴ *Wildlife crime linked to the Internet is defined in the CITES Glossary as: Crime involving any wildlife specimen, enabled or facilitated by the use of information and communication technology networks or any application in the digital world, including inter alia the public (clear) web, the dark web, online marketplaces, social network platforms, instant chat applications, peer to peer networks or email services.*

In proposing changes to the Resolutions indicated in paragraph 5 of document SC73 Doc. 16 for consideration by the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat will take into consideration comments made by Parties as described in document [SC73 SR](#).

Conclusion

16. Criminals continue to adapt and exploit every possible avenue to expand their illicit business and the growth of the internet and its accessibility allowed wildlife traffickers to move online and gain access to a vast international marketplace. Enforcement actors and relevant agencies must also continuously adapt, strengthen, and refine their strategies to respond to new trends and developments. It is therefore essential that Parties continue to actively pursue the implementation of the provisions [Regarding wildlife crime linked to the Internet](#) outlined in paragraphs 12 and 13 of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP18) on *Compliance and enforcement*.
17. Although more needs to be done, it is encouraging to note from the information received that authorities increasingly respond to and demonstrate commitment in their efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet. The reporting suggests that there is an increase in efforts by various Parties to ensure that the criminals involved are brought to justice. This includes through several successful investigations that resulted in prosecutions and the conviction of offenders involved, targeted operations, or the development of best practices and guidance materials. These are reflected where possible on the [Wildlife crime linked to the Internet](#) webpage and such efforts are commended. The Secretariat continues to encourage Parties to place an increased emphasis on combating wildlife crime linked to the Internet.

Recommendations

18. The Standing Committee is invited to note this document.