

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



Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Bangkok (Thailand), 3-14 March 2013

International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime

CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF ROUNDTABLE ON COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED WILDLIFE AND
FOREST CRIME FOR MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES

This document* has been submitted by the Secretariat, in relation to agenda item 15 on *International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime*.

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International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES

Roundtable on combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime
for Ministers and high-level representatives

Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC), Bangkok, Thailand

4 March 2013

CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

A roundtable on transnational organized wildlife and forest crime for Ministers and high-level representatives was held at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok from 9:30am to 12:00pm on 4 March 2013, within the margins of the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Ministers, Vice Ministers, Ambassadors and high-level government officials from 37 countries attended the roundtable, along with observers including representatives from intergovernmental organizations. The countries and organizations that were represented at the roundtable are listed in the Annex.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide the opportunity for Ministers and high-level representatives to share experiences across States and regions on efforts to combat transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, discuss what further efforts may be needed, and reaffirm a political commitment to combat such crime at the highest political level. The roundtable was not intended to draft formal recommendations.

The roundtable was hosted by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) – a collaboration of the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO). Recognizing that a well-coordinated law enforcement response is required to effectively combat transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, the five intergovernmental organizations joined forces as ICCWC in 2010, working together to support national wildlife law enforcement agencies and the sub-regional and regional networks mandated to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Financial support for the event was provided by the Government of Sweden.

The roundtable was chaired on behalf of ICCWC by Mr John E. Scanlon, Secretary-General of CITES.

Opening remarks were made by Mr Pithaya Pookaman, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand, and Mr Christoffer Berg, Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Sweden, Bangkok. Additionally, an introduction to ICCWC and the activities conducted by the Consortium was provided by Mr Bernd Rossbach, Director of Specialized Crime and Analysis, INTERPOL, who spoke on behalf of ICCWC.

Following opening remarks, the floor was opened to Ministers and high-level representatives for interventions on the topic *Addressing transnational organized wildlife and forest crime: challenges and solutions*.

This informal Chair's summary of the roundtable discussions has been produced by the Chair in cooperation with representatives from ICCWC partner organizations that attended the roundtable. Remarks and interventions made during the roundtable have not been attributed to speaker or country, but reflect only the Chair's general summary of the issues that were discussed.

Setting the scene for the roundtable

Despite commendable efforts to combat wildlife and forest crime, it continues to be a growing problem worldwide, and there is strong evidence of increased involvement of organized crime groups operating through well-developed criminal networks, and in some cases, rebel militia. This poses an immediate risk to wildlife and to people, and raises concern about the links between wildlife crime and national security.

Wildlife and forest crime has recently been brought to the fore at the highest political level, including through the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the UN Security Council and Resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

This attention clearly demonstrates that the international community increasingly recognizes wildlife and forest crime as a transnational organized crime that requires a determined and coordinated response. This high-level recognition helped set the scene for the roundtable discussions.

Summary of roundtable discussions

The roundtable enabled a high-level dialogue on combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime. Participants appreciated the opportunity provided by the roundtable to share their experiences and perspectives on combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, and thanked ICCWC for their initiative in organizing the event, the Government of Sweden for their financial support of the event and Thailand as the host government for CoP16.

Acknowledging the serious nature of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime

Participants acknowledged the serious nature of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, and a number made reference to the disturbing escalation in the levels of poaching and illegal trade, and the increasing involvement of organized crime groups. The broad-reaching impacts of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime were emphasized – on species and ecosystems, livelihoods, economies, and national and regional security. Highly-disturbing accounts were provided of human rights abuses and the murder of rangers – who are increasingly confronted by heavily-armed criminals and rebels – across range States, underlining the severity of the consequences of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime.

The dialogue highlighted that wildlife crime affects all Parties, with impacts across developed and developing countries. It further highlighted the need to work across range, transit and consumer States to combat this serious crime.

Reaffirming political commitment to combat wildlife and forest crime

A number of participants acknowledged the high-level international recognition given to combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, and noted the encouragement and support this provides for their national efforts. Many reaffirmed the strong commitment of their countries to fighting the organized crime groups that are behind transnational organized wildlife and forest crime.

Actively responding to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime

Participants welcomed the opportunity to learn more about the actions and programs being deployed in support of combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, and noted with interest the actions underway around the globe.

Encouraging reports were provided on the activities being implemented to combat wildlife crime, and to support the protection of biodiversity more broadly. Many participants highlighted the extensive protected area networks that have been established in their countries, along with efforts to develop and harmonize effective environmental policy and legislative frameworks, and to better connect policy to on-ground action.

A wide range of actions to combat the illicit trade in wildlife and forest products were presented, *inter alia*, the strengthening of legislative frameworks – in particular tougher fines and sanctions for perpetrators, increased surveillance effort in parks, disarmament programs and associated alternative livelihood schemes, coordination across multiple agencies at the national level, the coordination of high-level meetings and regional workshops on issues related to wildlife crime, awareness-raising among the travelling public to reduce demand for illicit wildlife and forest products, and training and capacity-building for wildlife law enforcement officials, police, customs and prosecutors. Bilateral agreements between Parties and participation in regional wildlife enforcement networks were mentioned as a positive and proactive approach of governments to cross-border crime.

The diversity of initiatives reported emphasized that transnational organized wildlife crime is a global issue that affects all countries and that demands attention in – and high levels of coordination across – range, transit and destination States.

Challenges of responding to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime

Many spoke of the challenges they were facing in responding to the increasingly-organized and sophisticated illicit trade in wildlife and forest products.

A number of participants stressed the urgent and pressing need for additional financial and human resources to effectively combat wildlife and forest crime, including from the international community. This lack of funding results in, and compounds, challenges such as insufficient rangers and frontline surveillance activity, and a lack of the equipment and technology needed to respond to sophisticated crime groups, and to emerging techniques such as silent killing, which are difficult to detect using current surveillance methods.

The need to engage the support of police and customs officials – and in some cases the military – was raised in recognition that the broad-reaching challenge of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime goes beyond the remit of wildlife law enforcement agencies.

Some participants spoke of the challenge posed by the high market price of ivory and rhino horn, which increases the attractiveness of wildlife crime as a high-profit, low-risk activity and raises the potential for, and incidences of, corruption among officials. The need for attention on livelihoods, including supporting alternative sustainable means for communities to make a living in range States, was emphasized by some.

The challenges of regional instability and cross-border conflicts were also raised.

While the high level of interest across governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations in combating wildlife and forest crime was generally supported, one participant noted with caution the risk of overlapping action due to the many players involved, and a concern that funds do not always reach the field. This highlighted the need to better coordinate the various activities underway to combat transnational organized wildlife and forest crime, and for effective priority-setting underpinned by both science and criminal intelligence data.

Support for coordinated and collective action to respond to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime

It was broadly recognized that the sum of existing efforts falls short of what is required across range, transit and consumer States to put an end to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime.

Many participants reaffirmed their intention to continue to enhance their existing measures to combat wildlife and forest crime, along with their willingness to work with partners to take the response to the next level. Even those States suffering significant difficulties noted that despite these challenges, they remain committed to the fight to combat transnational organized wildlife and forest crime. The need for global and regional solidarity to underpin the success of national efforts was emphasized.

The dialogue highlighted the compelling need to develop and implement coordinated and holistic responses to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime. It was acknowledged that one government alone cannot combat this strong and increasing threat. The importance of comprehensive action across range, transit and consumer States was stressed, along with the need for support from international organizations and partnerships such as ICCWC. Countries expressed their willingness to work together in support of such an approach and noted the valuable role that ICCWC could take.

A number of specific actions to respond to transnational organized wildlife and forest crime were also raised, *inter alia*, increased cooperation between wildlife enforcement networks, the establishment of a network of alert warning systems, the deployment of enterprise development schemes in range States to enhance livelihoods, equipping frontline enforcement with specialized equipment, and better use of forensics and enhanced communication among States and regions. The need to review all existing actions and initiatives across range, transit and consumer States, and to develop and apply holistic thinking over the entire enforcement chain – across national and organizational boundaries, and operating through multiple channels – were also highlighted.

Summary

The dialogue resulting from the roundtable highlights that participants broadly acknowledge that combating transnational organized wildlife crime is a complex matter that requires a holistic and coordinated response, and further, that it is an issue which demands a response that is commensurate with the scale and immediacy

of the risk posed by this serious crime. It is big business – and it demands a response equivalent to that afforded to other transnational organized crimes such as the trafficking of narcotics, humans or arms.

The action being taken to combat wildlife crime is encouraging and several positive stories were shared across range, transit and consumer States. However, the dialogue confirmed that while much good work is taking place, more national, regional and global effort and resources are urgently required to effectively combat transnational illicit trade in wildlife and forest products.

An imposing challenge lies ahead to combat the sophisticated criminal groups that are behind wildlife and forest crime, and to put an end to the alarming impacts that their activities are having on species, people and economies. The roundtable dialogue emphasized that working together must lie at the heart of this response. The perspectives and observations shared by participants highlighted that the impacts of transnational organized wildlife and forest crime go well beyond the species involved, and that the extent of the response required is beyond the sole remit of wildlife law enforcement agencies, or of one country or region alone.

The dialogue indicated that the global response to halt transnational organized wildlife and forest crime needs to be enhanced. Priorities raised during the roundtable include the need to engage the support of police, customs, and on some occasions the military, as well as other relevant organizations, to ensure a well-coordinated multi-disciplinary enforcement response, and to urgently attract additional donors and resources for national and international efforts. The international coordination role of ICCWC was also acknowledged and supported.

Most notably, the roundtable emphasized the importance of coordinating and aligning efforts, and to continue an open dialogue among Parties and relevant organizations as was made possible through the roundtable.

Acknowledgements

The Ministers and high-level representatives that participated in the roundtable on combating transnational organized wildlife and forest crime are thanked for their active participation to the dialogue and for their strong support to combating wildlife and forest crime.

The Government of Sweden is acknowledged for its generous support that allowed the event to take place.

The generous support of the Government of Thailand, the host country for CoP16, is also acknowledged.



PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN ATTENDANCE AT THE ROUNDTABLE ON TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED WILDLIFE AND FOREST CRIME FOR MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES
HELD IN BANGKOK ON 4 MARCH 2013.

Parties

Australia	Libya
Bahrain	Mozambique
Bhutan	New Zealand
Botswana	Peru
Canada	Philippines
Chile	Portugal
China	South Africa
Congo	Sri Lanka
Costa Rica	Sudan
Côte d'Ivoire	Sweden
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Thailand
Ethiopia	Uganda
France	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Germany	United Republic of Tanzania
Indonesia	United States of America
Ireland	Viet Nam
Israel	Zambia
Kenya	Zimbabwe
Kuwait	

Observers

CITES Secretariat (ICCWC partner)
INTERPOL (ICCWC partner)
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (ICCWC partner)
World Bank (ICCWC Partner)
World Customs Organization (ICCWC partner)

African Development Bank
CITES Standing Committee
European Commission
IUCN
Lusaka Agreement Task Force
Prince of Wales International Sustainability Unit