

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



Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Colombo (Sri Lanka), 23 May – 3 June 2019

Interpretation and implementation matters

General compliance and enforcement

Combating wildlife cybercrime

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 17th meeting (CoP17, Johannesburg, 2016), the Conference of the Parties retained Decision 15.57 and adopted Decisions 17.92 and 17.93 on *Combating wildlife cybercrime*, as follows:

Directed to all Parties

15.57 *Parties are urged to:*

- a) *submit information to the CITES Secretariat on best practices and on websites adhering to codes of conduct for posting on the CITES website;*
- b) *publish results of scientific research on correlations between use of the Internet and the rate of wildlife crime, and share these results with the CITES Secretariat;*
- c) *assess the extent of and trends in commerce of CITES-listed species via the Internet, and submit such information to the Secretariat for analysis; and*
- d) *submit information to the CITES Secretariat for analysis on any changes in trade routes and methods of shipment that have been observed as a result of increased use of the Internet to promote trade in wildlife.*

17.92 *All Parties should:*

- a) *provide the Secretariat with any changes or updates to domestic legislation that pertain to wildlife cybercrime as well as any other relevant domestic measures;*
- b) *provide the Secretariat any best practice models that pertain to regulation of online marketplaces and social media platforms, including enforcement protocols; and*
- c) *seek input from purveyors and owners of online marketplaces and social media platforms for the purpose of sharing any relevant information with the Secretariat.*

Directed to the Secretariat

17.93 *The Secretariat shall:*

- a) *subject to available resources and where appropriate, engage with relevant social media platforms, search engines and e-commerce platforms to address illegal international trade in CITES-listed species through these platforms, and raise awareness of the conservation plight of CITES-listed species affected by illegal trade;*
- b) *in its enforcement-support role, provide assistance and expertise regarding wildlife cybercrime enforcement operations and investigations;*
- c) *share on its e-portal any information received from Parties, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), and other experts regarding domestic measures to address wildlife cybercrime and any relevant best practices, manuals, or guidance, including any information provided by Parties pursuant to Decision 17.92;*
- d) *engage with INTERPOL on efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet, and invite INTERPOL to consider establishing capacity, at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore, to support the efforts of Parties to combat such crimes, and to develop guidelines for Parties on how to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet more effectively;*
- e) *liaise with ICWC regarding best practices and model domestic measures for addressing illegal e-commerce and wildlife cybercrime; and*
- f) *report on its discussion with INTERPOL and ICWC at the 69th and 70th meetings of the Standing Committee, and subsequently at the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.*

Implementation of Decisions 17.92, 17.93, paragraph c) and 15.57

3. The Secretariat issued Notification to the Parties [No. 2017/036](#) of 4 May 2017, inviting Parties to submit information in accordance with Decisions 17.92 and 15.57 to the Secretariat. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America provided information in response to the Notification. The Secretariat notes that the instructions in Decisions 17.92 and 15.57 partially overlapped, which led to a degree of duplication in some of the responses received from Parties. This was also highlighted by the Parties in their responses. A summary of the information provided was presented to the Standing Committee at its 69th meeting (SC69, Geneva, November 2017), in document [SC69 Doc. 31.3](#). The information provided indicates that some Parties have already made commendable progress, but also demonstrates the need for further efforts by Parties in engaging with social media platforms, search engines and e-commerce platforms to address illegal trade in CITES-listed species linked to the Internet.
4. In accordance with Decision 17.93, paragraph c), the Secretariat processed the information and will make it available on the forthcoming webpage on *Wildlife crime linked to the Internet* on the CITES website.¹ The webpage will include information received from Parties, partners of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), and other experts. The Secretariat will also use the webpage to, as appropriate, continue to consolidate other information relevant to this topic that comes to its attention in the future. At the time of writing, the webpage is being finalized and the Secretariat will provide a further oral update on this at the present meeting.

Implementation of Decision 17.93, paragraphs a), b) and d)

5. The Secretariat, at SC69 and the 70th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC70, Sochi, October 2018), reported to the Committee on its activities and other developments relevant to the implementation of Decision 17.93 paragraphs a), b) and d). These include, among other: the participation of the Secretariat in the 2nd meeting of the Sub-Groups of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Working Group on E-Commerce (WGEC), in Brussels, Belgium, in January 2018;² and contributing to the work of this group in the

¹ https://cites.org/eng/prog/imp/Combating_wildlife_crime

² As highlighted in paragraph 14 of document SC69 Doc. 31.3 on Combating wildlife cybercrime, the WCO WGEC has a Safety and Security stream which explores the topic of illicit trade over the Internet in a cross-cutting manner covering illicit trade in general. Wildlife

intersessional period; the participation of the Secretariat and the Chair of the intersessional working group on wildlife cybercrime established by the Standing Committee at SC69³ in the 'Cyber-enabled Wildlife Crime Workshop' jointly hosted by INTERPOL and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), in Lyon, France, in June 2018; research by the Secretariat regarding e-commerce in the 365 CITES-listed medicinal plant species on Amazon and Ebay;⁴ INTERPOL research on the Darknet; the establishment in 2018 of a *Global coalition to end wildlife trafficking online*⁵ aiming to reduce illegal online trade in wildlife by 80% by 2020; and the formation in November 2017 of a new alliance of Internet companies based in China to address wildlife crime linked to the Internet.⁶ In addition, at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade, in October 2018, a *Global Wildlife Cybercrime Action Plan* was adhered to by a number of signatories.⁷ Activities and initiatives such as these align with Decisions 15.57, 17.92, 17.93, paragraphs a) and b), and the provisions under *Regarding e-commerce of specimens of CITES-listed species* in Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP17) on *Compliance and enforcement*. The Secretariat will also, where relevant and appropriate, include information on these activities and developments, in the webpage on *Wildlife crime linked to the Internet*.

6. To implement Decision 17.93, paragraph d), and in support of the implementation of Resolution Conf. 11.3 (Rev. CoP17), paragraph 12 d), the Secretariat engaged with INTERPOL as required. The Secretary-General of CITES formally corresponded with the Secretary General of INTERPOL about this matter in February 2018. INTERPOL subsequently designated a contact person on this matter, with whom the Secretariat worked closely, and in December 2018, INTERPOL formally communicated to the Secretariat that resources have been allocated by INTERPOL and measures have been put in place to establish temporary capacity to provide advice and assist Parties in their efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore. INTERPOL existing resources currently support this capacity, and a limited amount of funding is available through the ICCWC Strategic Programme 2016-2020, which will be mobilized in 2019 to maintain this capacity for a period of at least one year. The Secretariat, however, notes that INTERPOL has informally advised that, unless longer-term financing is secured, INTERPOL might not be in a position to maintain such capacity.
7. INTERPOL is also working to finalize the development of *Guidelines on how to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet*, as anticipated by Decision 17.93, paragraph d). These guidelines, including matters such as the basic concepts of online crime investigations, open source investigations, and the gathering, requesting and preservation of evidence; will provide a practical tool to law enforcement officers on how to investigate cases of wildlife crime linked to the Internet. It is expected that the guidelines will be ready to be launched at CoP18, and the Secretariat will provide an oral update at CoP18.
8. The Secretariat prepared draft decisions 18.AA and 18.BB regarding the capacity established at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation in Singapore and the *Guidelines on how to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet* in development. These draft decisions are in paragraph 10 of the present document for consideration by the Conference of the Parties.

Implementation of Decision 17.93, paragraph e)

9. In accordance with Decision 17.93, paragraph e), the Secretariat liaised with its partners in the ICCWC to seek information on best practices and model domestic measures for addressing illegal e-commerce and wildlife crime linked to the Internet. The Secretariat received comprehensive responses from INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the World Customs Organization, and presented such information to the Standing Committee at both SC69 and SC70. This included information on: the INTERPOL *Cyber Wildlife Crime Investigations course* and training and mentorship programmes;⁸ INTERPOL's *Global Cybercrime Strategy 2016 to 2020*;⁹ the work of the UNODC project on *Disrupting Environmental Crime Markets with a focus on illegal trade on the Internet, illicit financial flows and threat finance*; the provision by UNODC of experts working specifically to support the efforts of Parties to address wildlife cybercrime in Kenya and in Thailand; and the work of the WCO *Working Group on E-Commerce*

crime is one of the risks being considered by the group. For additional information see <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/69/E-SC69-31-03.pdf>

³ See document SC69 Sum. 5 (Rev. 1): <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/sc/69/sum/E-SC69-Sum-05-R1.pdf>

⁴ <https://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/com/pc/23/inf/E-PC23-Inf-10.pdf>

⁵ The founding members of the Global Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online are Alibaba, Baidu, Baixing, eBay, Etsy, Facebook, Google, Huaxia Collection, Instagram, Kuaishou, Mall for Africa, Microsoft, Pinterest, Qyer, Ruby Lane, Shengshi Collection, Tencent, Wen Wan Tian Xia, Zhongyikupai, Zhuanzhuan and 58 Group, convened by the World Wildlife Fund, TRAFFIC and IFAW. For additional details see <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/global-coalition-to-end-wildlife-trafficking-online>

⁶ <http://www.traffic.org/home/2017/11/22/chinese-internet-giants-launch-alliance-to-combat-wildlife-c.html>

⁷ <https://www.ifaw.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Wildlife%20Cybercrime%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

⁸ See for example: https://twitter.com/INTERPOL_EC/status/996943761191059456

⁹ https://www.interpol.int/content/download/34471/452245/version/4/file/007-04_Summary_CYBER_Strategy_2017_01_EN%20LR.pdf

(WGEC).¹⁰ This information has also been processed for inclusion in the webpage on *Wildlife crime linked to the Internet*, as appropriate.

Recommendations

10. The Conference of the Parties is invited to adopt draft decision 18.AA and 18.BB, as follows:

Directed to Parties

- 18.AA 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.BB 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.

¹⁰ <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/enforcement-and-compliance/activities-and-programmes/electronic-crime.aspx>