

# Resolution on wildlife crime

2013/2747(RSP) - 15/01/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 647 votes to 14 with 10 abstentions a resolution on combating wildlife crime. The resolution was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, ECR, and GUE/NGL groups. It noted that wildlife crime, was a serious transnationally organised criminal business with an **annual turnover of at least USD 19 billion**, and was now the fourth largest illegal activity in the world, after drug trafficking, counterfeiting and human trafficking. Stressing that the EU was a major transit destination for illegal wildlife products such as ivory and live animals, and therefore in a privileged position to control this trade, Parliament urged the Commission to **establish an EU plan of action against wildlife crime and trafficking**, including clear deliverables and timelines. It remarked that the EU was both a significant market and a transit route for illegal wildlife trade with Europol estimating revenues generated by the trafficking of endangered species amounted to between EUR 18 billion and EUR 26 billion per annum, and with the EU being the foremost destination market in the world.

**Action within the EU:** Members expressed concern that organised crime groups found wildlife trafficking attractive because of the lack of law enforcement capacity and implementation, and because of high profits and weak penalties. They called on Member States to introduce moratoria on all commercial imports, exports and domestic sales and purchases of tusks and raw and worked ivory products until wild elephant populations were no longer threatened by poaching.

Parliament asked the Commission and Council to:

- support dedicated training for the complete enforcement chain under the relevant existing financial instruments;
- leverage their trade and development instruments to establish dedicated programmes to strengthen the implementation of CITES and provide resources for capacity-building against poaching and trafficking, in particular by supporting, strengthening and expanding enforcement initiatives such as ASEAN-WEN (ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network), HA-WEN (Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network), LATF (Lusaka Agreement Task Force), which aim to establish regional centres of expertise and provide models for cooperation against wildlife crime;

Member States were also asked to:

- join other CITES Parties in sending out a clear signal against wildlife trafficking and demand for illegal wildlife products by destroying their stockpiles of illegal ivory;
- provide for immediate confiscation of any seized specimens, in order to better implement CITES and protect the welfare of live animals;
- strengthen the judiciary in the EU so that wildlife criminals receive penalties which are commensurate with the seriousness of the crime. The Commission was asked to streamline harmonisation between Member States under Commission Recommendation No 2007/425/EC in order to avoid Member States with the lowest penalties being exploited as a preferred entry point;
- set appropriate levels of sanctions under Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law, which harmonises the definitions for wildlife crime related offences throughout the Union;

- ensure that illicit trafficking of wild fauna and flora with the involvement of organised criminal groups was **defined as a criminal offence punishable by up to four years of prison or more**, so that the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime could be used as a basis for international cooperation and mutual legal assistance.

Parliament wanted to see a **specialised Wildlife Crime Unit within** Europol, which would have full transnational powers as well as sufficient and skilled human resources and adequate funding, with a view to centralising information and analysis and coordinating investigations, the result being more joint investigations and a more coordinated strategic approach. Member States were asked to **establish the National Environmental Security Task Force (NESTs)** recommended by Interpol, and to engage in coordinated operations through the proposed specialised Wildlife Crime Unit within Europol.

**International action:** Parliament called for the fight against wildlife crime to be included as a **priority in the programming of the financial instruments for development aid**, in both thematic and regional programming. It called on the Commission and Member States to do their utmost, at CITES and in **bilateral dialogue with consumer countries**, to ensure the closure of parallel legal markets, international and domestic, that were stimulating demand for species at significant risk such as elephants, rhinos and tigers.

It also urged:

- the **establishment of a Trust Fund** under Article 187 of the revised financial regulation, with the objective of safeguarding protected areas and combating wildlife trafficking and poaching, **as part of an Action Plan** against wildlife trafficking;
- strong support for the International Consortium on combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), comprising CITES, Interpol, UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), the World Bank and the World Customs Organisation, **including through provision of financial resources and specialist expertise;**
- collaboration with **African and Asian range states**, to help those countries strengthen their policies and legal frameworks, increase law enforcement capacity, develop effective judicial systems and reinforce mechanisms to tackle corruption;

Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to support the **development of alternative livelihoods for local communities** closest to the wildlife concerned and engage the communities in anti-poaching operations.