EU action plan against wildlife trafficking

2016/2076(INI) - 24/11/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Parliament adopted by 567 votes to 5, with 39 abstentions, a resolution in response to the Commission communication aiming to propose an EU action plan against wildlife trafficking.

International crime in need of a coordinated approach: Members recalled that wildlife trafficking is an organised international crime which is estimated to be worth approximately **EUR 20 billion annually**, becoming one of the biggest and most profitable forms of organised cross-border crime. There are links between wildlife crime and other forms of organised crime, including money laundering and the financing of militias and terrorist groups.

Welcoming the Commission action plan against wildlife trafficking, Parliament called on the European Commission, the Member States, the European External Action Service and the EU agencies Europol and Eurojust to **recognise that wildlife crime is a serious and growing threat** and to address it with the greatest political urgency.

The resolution highlighted the need:

- for comprehensive and **coordinated approaches** across policy areas including trade, development, foreign affairs, transport and tourism, and justice and home affairs;
- to provide **adequate financial resources** in the EU budget and the national budgets in order to ensure effective implementation of this plan;
- to set up an ongoing detailed **monitoring and evaluation mechanism** to measure progress.

The Commission is called upon to establish a dedicated **Wildlife Trafficking Coordinator's office**, mirroring the model used to fight human trafficking.

Preventing wildlife trafficking and addressing its root causes: Members called for a targeted and coordinated series of **awareness-raising campaigns** by the EU, third countries, stakeholders and civil society with the aim of reducing demand related to the illegal trade in wildlife products. They called on the EU to **address corruption** and the shortcomings of international governance measures across the wildlife trafficking chain.

The governments of the supply countries are urged to:

- improve the rule of law and create effective deterrents by strengthening criminal investigation, prosecution and sentencing;
- enact stronger laws treating illicit wildlife trafficking as a 'serious crime';
- commit to a zero-tolerance policy on corruption.

Making implementation and enforcement more effective: Member States are called upon to put in place **wildlife trafficking action plans** and to publish and **exchange the information** on seizures and arrests relating to wildlife crimes.

Parliament called on the Member States to:

- **set appropriate levels of sanctions for wildlife crime offences** and for the Commission to take steps towards establishing and implementing common minimum rules concerning the definition of criminal offences and sanctions relating to wildlife trafficking;
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- engage with the operators of social media platforms, search engines and e-commerce platforms on the problem of the **illegal internet trade in wildlife**. The Commission and the Member States are called upon to strengthen control measures and to develop policies to address potential illegal activity on the internet.

Strengthening the global partnership: Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to **step up dialogue and cooperation with source, transit and destination countries** in the wildlife trafficking supply chain and to provide them with technical and economic assistance and diplomatic support. It called for a trust fund or similar facility to be set up with the objective of safeguarding protected areas and combating wildlife trafficking and poaching.

The Commission is called upon to include **mandatory and enforceable sustainable development chapters in all EU trade agreements and negotiations**, with specific reference to halting illegal trade in wildlife in all economic sectors.

EU as a destination market, source and transit point: Parliament underlined that trophy hunting has contributed to large-scale declines in endangered species. It suggested:

- the adoption of a **precautionary approach** for the import of hunting trophies from species protected under the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations;
- the **full and immediate ban** at European level of trade, export or re-export within the EU and to destinations outside the EU of ivory.

The resolution also called on the EU to strengthen the existing control instruments, including the use of **traceability mechanisms**. The transport sector should play a pivotal role, for example by implementing an early warning detection system. The role of **public-private partnerships** is highlighted in this regard.

Lastly, Parliament called for Member States to introduce in-country compliance monitoring with regular checks on traders and permit holders such as pet shops, breeders, research centres and nurseries, and including monitoring of trades such as fashion, art, medicine and catering, that may use illegal plant and animal parts.