

EU common commercial policy in the context of wildlife sustainability imperatives

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The Committee on International Trade adopted the own-initiative report by Emma McCLARKIN (ECR, UK) on EU Common Commercial Policy in the context of wildlife sustainability imperatives.

The world is facing an unprecedented surge in wildlife trafficking. According to estimates, the illegal trade in wild flora and fauna is the fourth most profitable area of criminal activity, with an estimated turnover of as much as EUR 20 billion.

Members welcomed the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking and stated that the EU must lead efforts in tackling not only supply-side issues, including development issues on the ground in third countries, but also demand for illegal products in domestic markets, including online platforms.

The report made the following recommendations:

- on trade policy, the Union should adopt an approach that not only prioritises the issue of combating the illegal wildlife trade but **includes in all future agreements** provisions aimed at: (i) its reduction and ultimate elimination; along with (ii) robust and effective complementary measures, with particular regard to training, prevention and the application of sanctions in the field of forest management, health and customs;
- EU trade policy should **not prevent** the EU or its trading partners from taking decisions that are necessary for the protection of wildlife and natural resources, provided that such measures continue to be in pursuit of legitimate public policy objectives and do not represent arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination;
- given that there is no “one size fits all” solution to global wildlife sustainability and combating the illegal trade, it is necessary to **ensure full flexibility and to share information, data and best practice**, in order to facilitate dialogue with a view to enhanced cooperation, bearing in mind the cross-border nature of this type of infringement;
- Member States should consider policy solutions that would allow for the **elimination of all remaining legal loopholes** that could facilitate the “laundering” of illegally sourced wildlife and wildlife products; exhaustive monitoring should be carried out in this connection;
- the EU should consider a possible ban at European level of trade, export or re-export within and outside the EU of **elephant ivory**, in a manner compliant with WTO law;
- **sufficient resources** should be committed for policies and measures designed to meet the EU’s objectives in terms of combating the illegal wildlife trade, which includes resources for third countries in terms of capacity-building;
- the Commission and the Member States should continue to work **with all actors concerned** to ensure an integrated approach that acts to curtail demand and raise awareness in demand markets;
- more should be done to ensure that the illegal criminal networks and syndicates active in illegal wildlife trade are targeted for disruption, elimination and prosecution, and that Member States should ensure that the punishments and sentences reserved for wildlife crime are both proportionate and dissuasive and in line with commitments, as defined in the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime;
- the EU should explore, within the scope of the WTO framework, how global trade and environmental regimes can better support each other;

- lastly, further opportunities for cooperation between the WTO and CITES should be explored, in particular in terms of offering technical assistance and capacity building on trade and environment matters to officials from developing countries.