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Photo by Nguyen V.
1st Place Above Water Seascapes 2022

#GTMUN2025

Bridging technology and diplomacy.

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Letter from the Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates,

It is my greatest honor to welcome you to the 26th Georgia Tech Model United Nations Conference. My name is Victoria Rodriguez, and I have the privilege of serving as the Secretary General for the 2025 session.

As a mechanical engineering student here at Georgia Tech, I can confidently say that participating in Model United Nations (MUN) has opened several personal, academic, and professional doors. In this journey of 13 years, I've had the opportunity of being a delegate, a director, a mentor, and finally, a Sec-Gen. Sometimes a breeze, sometimes an up-hill battle filled with blood, sweat and tears. I've made several friends and won awards along the way, but what I truly carry with me are the important things: the value of empathy, the courage to speak when it matters, and the humility to listen when others have something to teach.

This year, we are bringing you our largest GTMUN to date. With approximately 900 delegates joining us in 16 committees, we are proud to be one of the most dynamic forums for debate in the Southeastern United States. And I can promise you that it will also be the best GTMUN yet, given the tireless work of our Secretariat and staff, who have poured their hearts and souls into building a conference that you will remember long after the gavels fall.

GTMUN is more than just a conference; it is an opportunity for exploration. Through the years, we have cultivated a space where you can explore different positions on the global stage, discover new ways to approach problems and craft solutions, and test the kind of delegate you want to become. You will experiment with speeches, refine your negotiation style, and create crisis arcs that challenge both you and your peers in committee. Just as Georgia Tech is a hub for innovation, GTMUN is the best space to challenge you intellectually, diplomatically, and personally.

But the value of this conference goes beyond leadership, teamwork, and public speaking. Like our slogan says, "bridging technology and diplomacy," GTMUN is about bringing ideas closer to people. It's about connecting logic with compassion, ambition with responsibility, and creativity with collaboration. I hope the skills you foster during this year's conference (and the friends you make along the way) will be something you carry with you far beyond these two days.

As you prepare for this conference, I encourage you to bring all your energy, passion, and curiosity into every committee session. Debate boldly, listen openly, and collaborate sincerely. On behalf of the GTMUN Secretariat, I welcome you to the GTMUN 2025 Conference. We cannot wait to see the impact you will make.

Wishing you the best of luck as you prepare for your committee,

Victoria Rodriguez

Secretary General of GTMUN 2025

Position Paper Rubric

What is a *Position Paper*?

A position paper is a paper which describes how a country intends to address the topics of the committee, detailing tangible solutions to committee issues and connection to the country's policies. A position paper should contain details for each topic that will be addressed by the committee.

Formatting Requirements

- 12-point font, double-spaced Times New Roman
- 1-2 pages per topic (excluding Works Cited page)
- A Works Cited page with citations in MLA format
- Files submitted in .pdf format with title "GTMUN25_{short committee name}_{assigned country name}.pdf"
- e.g., "GTMUN25_DISEC_GERMANY.pdf" or "GTMUN25_UNOOSA_United_States.pdf"

START EACH TOPIC PAGE WITH

- Committee: [Name of committee]
- Delegation: [Name of delegation]
- Topic: [Topic name/description]

In order to be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a position paper and receive a score of at least **12/20 (for single-topic committees)** or **24/40 (for double-topic committees).**

	Great (5)	Good (4)	Adequate (3)	Poor (1)
Background	• Detailed description of the topic (including dates and stakeholders) • Several facts and statistics • Discusses many relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Basic description of topic (including some dates and stakeholders) • Some facts and statistics • Discusses some relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Minimal description of topic (with no or few dates and stakeholders) • Few facts and statistics • Misses some key relevant UN documents and resolutions	• Unclear or incorrect description of topic • Incorrect or missing facts or statistics • No mention of relevant UN documents and resolutions
Policy	• Country's detailed history with issue • Detailed present position (or a strongly-defended inferred position) of country • Several references to statements from appropriate officials or documents • Several facts and statistics	• Country's basic history with issue • Present position (or reasonable inferred position) of country • Some references to statements from appropriate officials or documents • Some facts and statistics	• Sparsely describes country's history with issue • Present position (or basic inferred position) of country • Few references to statements from appropriate officials and documents • Few facts and statistics	• Incorrect or missing description of country's history with issue • Incorrect present position (or unreasonably inferred position) of country • No references to statements from appropriate officials and documents • Incorrect or missing facts and statistics
Solutions	• Detailed personal objectives • Proposes well-supported potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with and provides strong reasoning for selections • Actionable, reasonable solutions which are within the scope of the committee	• Expresses personal objectives • Proposes reasonable potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with and provides reasonable justification for selections • Actionable solutions within the scope of committee	• States personal objectivew • Proposes potential solutions • Identifies delegates to work with • Actionable solutions	• No proposed goals or plans • No potential collaborators mentioned • Implausible or missing actionable solutions
Mechanics	• No grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors • Numerous and diverse citations from appropriate sources	• Few grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors • Citations from appropriate sources	• Some grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes • One or two citations from inappropriate sources	• Many grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes • No citations from appropriate sources

Introduction to Committee

In June 1972, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) was founded to monitor the state of the environment and coordinate responses to the most pressing environmental challenges in the world. As part of its mandate, UNEP aims to solve the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste.[1] Composed of 193 member states, UNEP champions innovative solutions to this planetary crisis through science, global communications campaigns, and supporting countries in their development of environmental legislation.[2] This year, GTMUN's UNEP committee highlights two pressing environmental issues: International frameworks to combat invasive species and protect wildlife, and international measures to prevent the illegal wildlife trade.

Disclaimer

Model United Nations provides an opportunity for delegates to engage diplomatically with topics of global importance and explore possibilities for conflict resolution in a meaningful way. Many of the topics at hand may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter. We ask delegates to be respectful and professional when engaging with their committee and communicating with fellow delegates and GTMUN Conference staff. The content warning below is meant to warn you of potentially controversial topics that are present in the content of this background guide, as well as content that may appear in other aspects of the committee (e.g. debate, speeches, directives), so that you can prepare yourself before reading this background guide and participating in the committee.

At GTMUN, we take equity violations very seriously and require delegates to fully comply with our equity guidelines. Failure to do so will result in an immediate disqualification from awards, and you may be asked to leave the conference. Please remain respectful in committee, and avoid overgeneralizations as well as take into account individual differences and contexts during your speeches. If you have any questions regarding our equity guidelines, we encourage you to contact one of our staff members.

If, because of this committee's content warning, you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our staff via email at gtmunconference@gmail.com.

History of the Committee

1972	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment • Conference that placed the environment on the global agenda and led to the formation of UNEP
1973	States adopt the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) • Regulates and sometimes bans the trade of more than 38,000 animals and plants
1974	Establishment of Regional Seas Programme • Coordinates action to protect marine biodiversity by providing a platform to strengthen regional dialogue and partnerships
1980	Launch of the World Conservation Strategy
1992	Convention for Biological Diversity is Signed • Governs the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the equitable sharing of the benefits from genetic resources
2000	Millennium Declaration • Outlines the Millennium Development Goals. Sets targets for biodiversity loss, forest cover, etc.
2005	The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report is Established • Provides a framework for evaluating progress toward the Millennium Development Goals and SDG goals.
2010	Nusa Dua Declaration • Underscores the importance of biodiversity and the advantages of a green economy
2012	Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services • Independent body that aims to provide credible information on biodiversity
2021	Making Peace with Nature Report • Seminal report that offers a blueprint on how to tackle the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution)
2021	Decade on Ecosystem Restoration
2022	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework • Responds to decline in nature, which threatens the survival of 1 million specie

Topic 1

Finding Solutions to Combat the Spread of Invasive Species

Key Terms and Acronyms

Invasive Alien Species	Organisms that are often unintentionally introduced by humans into ecosystems where they do not naturally occur
Native species	Naturally occurring species in a particular region, habitat, or ecosystem
Vectors	Means through which species are transported from one location to another. With invasive species, this refers to shipping, trade, travel, etc.
Ecosystem	A community of interacting organisms and their physical environment
Habitat	The natural environment where an organism grows that provides all essential elements for survival
Biodiversity	The variety of life on earth, including the diversity of species, ecosystems, and genetic variation
Biological Control	The use of natural enemies, like predators, to control the populations of invasive plants or animals
Biological Control Agent	An organism used to control a pest/invasive species
Endemic	A plant or animal that is native or restricted to a certain place

Introduction

Invasive alien species (IAS) are plants, animals, or microorganisms introduced by humans to an ecosystem where they do not naturally occur.[3] Often introduced unintentionally through shipping, fishing, and travel, these species can spread rapidly due to a lack of natural predators or ecological controls. Once introduced, invasive species can significantly alter natural habitats, compete with native organisms for resources, and even cause the extinction of native plants and animals.[4] Thus, the spread of alien species poses a major threat to global biodiversity.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life in the world, a particular habitat, or ecosystem. The majority of the world's biodiversity is housed in tropical forests like the Amazon. According to the UNEP, more than 1 billion lives depend on forests, with "a quarter of all medicines coming from tropical forest plants".[5] Ocean biodiversity is also critical, as many people depend on marine animals as their main source of protein. Thus, without abundant biodiversity on Earth, the quality of life would drastically decrease. With IAS contributing to "40% of all animal extinctions since the 17th century", the UNEP is deeply invested in combating the spread of invasive species as part of its mission to safeguard biodiversity and human health.[6]

History

Colonialism from the 15th - 19th century drove global interaction on an unprecedented scale. Ships became major vectors for species movement as European settlers transported plants and animals for medicinal or agricultural use.[7] Today, modern shipping practices have exacerbated the global transport of invasive organisms via ballast water and hull fouling.[8] Ships take in ballast water from their ports to maintain balance and release this water when they reach their destination. This introduces microorganisms to a non-native ecosystem, potentially causing invasions. Similarly, ship hulls accumulate marine organisms like algae and barnacles, which are transported to new areas as the ship travels. The introduction of IAS often occur unintentionally, as seen with brown rats stowing away on ships and spreading throughout the Pacific Islands in the 18th century.[9] These rats are known to eat native species and carry diseases, having deadly implications for native organisms and humans.

Islands are particularly vulnerable to invasive species and species extinction due to their evolutionary history. Islands often evolve in isolation, lacking extreme

predation or competition, leaving them especially unguarded against aggressive IAS like mongooses or cats.[10] Since islands have a large number of endemic species found nowhere else on Earth, species invasion can lead to disproportionate extinction rates. For example, invasive species are responsible for roughly 86% of known extinctions on islands.[11] This poses a major global threat, especially since islands hold 20% of biodiversity on Earth.[12]

Beyond their detrimental ecological impacts, IAS can act as vectors for diseases that endanger human health. Invasive species like mosquitoes carry a host of diseases including Dengue fever, West Nile virus, and Zika virus.[13] These diseases pose risks like fatigue, fever, and, for pregnant individuals, can result in severe birth defects.[14] IAS also pose major risks to nutrition and food security. For countries reliant on agriculture, forestry, and fishing, damage from invasive species can reduce harvests and thus decrease food supply within the country. This is particularly concerning for countries and territories in the Pacific, many of which are islands lacking defenses against IAS.[15]

Female mosquito feeding off a human finger

In 1992, the United Nations signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which has three objectives: conserve biological diversity, sustainably use the components of biological diversity, and equitably share the benefits from the use of genetic resources.[16] Article 8(h) of this convention specifies that all members "shall…prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species".[17] The CBD has published guidance on the prevention and control of invasive species, promoting increased cooperation

between governments and organizations to reduce the unintentional spread of IAS. This guidance also advocates for the improvement of invasive species monitoring systems.

Control efforts (Benefits and Limitations)

Farmer spraying field of crops with pesticides

Invasive species are typically controlled through physical, chemical, or biological means. Physical/mechanical control refers to the manual removal of invasive species through harvesting, physical destruction, flooding, mulching, etc.[18] This method of control targets full eradication of the specific invasive species but is labor intensive and costly. On the other hand, chemical control efforts involve substances like pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides. Though these chemicals are highly effective in destroying IAS, they can also have detrimental impacts on the surrounding environment by damaging soil and water quality, surrounding vegetation, and animals. In this way, chemical control efforts of IAS could threaten biodiversity rather than safeguarding it. [19]

Lastly, biological control involves the introduction of "control agents/species" which prey on the IAS.[20] These agents can be effective in eradicating invasive species but require a great deal of testing to ensure that they will not harm the entire ecosystem. Without this testing, it is possible for the control agent to attack other, non-invasive organisms and, similar to chemical control, devastate the entire ecosystem. For example, in the 19th century, Hawaii had trouble with invasive rats decimating sugarcane fields. To solve this, mongoose were introduced as a biological control measure in the late 19th century.[21] However, the species did not undergo the appropriate testing, and instead began attacking birds, small mammals, and other vegetation.[22] Today, mongoose remain a prominent invasive species on the Hawaiian islands.

Economic Implications

Mongoose in field

As expected, invasive species are incredibly damaging to the global economy. In 2023, the World Economic Forum estimated the cost of invasive species to be $423 billion per year.[23] These expenses relate to the management costs of chemical, physical, and biological control efforts, investments in research, and crop losses. For countries with high agricultural exports, invasive alien species decrease crop yield and quality, which reduces exports, increases trade deficits, and lowers GDPs. Additionally, food production systems in these countries could be jeopardized due to lower crop yield caused by IAS.[24] Since the agricultural sector tends to be critical for LDCs, these countries experience a disproportionate economic impact due to IAS, and many LDCs are not equipped to handle this challenge.

Current Devlopments

Fruit Flies in Senegal

Bactrocera Dorsalis on white flowers

Bactrocera dorsalis, commonly called the oriental fruit fly, is a species of fruit fly originating from Southeast Asia. This fly was detected in Africa in 2003 and rapidly spread across the continent, infesting fruits and vegetables. For example, Senegalese mangoes, which compose about 63% of the country's total fruit and vegetable production, have been infested by the Bactrocera dorsalis, leading to premature dropping and rotting of the mango harvests.[25] Research conducted in Dakar, Senegal suggests that adding neem oil and kaolin to the soil of mango orchards could lower infestation rates of the fruit fly.[26] These substances act as organic insecticides, avoiding the harmful side effects of chemical pest control. Studies remain in the preliminary phase and have not been adopted nationwide. However, they suggest that directly targeting farming practices could reduce the impact of invasive species in the agricultural sector.

Cane Toads in Australia

Cane toads (Bufo Marinus) were first introduced to Australia in 1935 to control beetles in the sugar cane industry.[27] Since then, this control species has spread throughout the northeastern part of the country and is projected to spread further westward. Cane toads are incredibly poisonous and secrete deadly toxins on their skin. Birds and other animals who attempt to prey on this species can quickly die upon ingestion, causing a decrease in native Australian predators. Studies have shown that it is possible to implement physical control methods of cane toads in small areas through collecting the species' eggs or disposing of adult toads. To this effect, the country has also standardized procedures for the human euthanasia and disposal of cane toads.[28] However, these methods have proven difficult to adopt on a national scale. Similarly, since

Image of cane toad (Rhinella marina)

cane toads are invulnerable to Australian predators or diseases, the Australian government has instead decided to focus on minimizing the impact of the species on its ecosystems by planning around the species.[28] In 2011, Australia published a Threat Abatement Plan for cane toads which focuses on investing in research on the management of cane toads to protect Australian ecosystems.[29]

Current International Frameworks/ Developments

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is an independent governmental body whose goal is to "strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity [and] long-term human development".[30] Composed of 150 member states and observer organizations, IPBES published a global Assessment Report of Invasive Alien Species in 2024, identifying invasive species as one of the main threats to biodiversity in recent years.[31]

Image of Kumming-Montreal Global Diversity Framework

The Kunming-Montreal Global Diversity Framework, established in 2022, aims to halt or even reverse nature loss by 2030. The plan has 23 targets in response to the decline in nature, which has threatened 1 million species globally. Target 6 of the framework specifically refers to IAS, aiming to control and eradicate these species by reducing the rates of introduction and establishment in non-native ecosystems.[32] The target specifically identifies islands as priority sites for IAS reduction.

Directives / QARMAs

As global leaders, you have an important role to play in the prosperity of our ecosystems and the conservation of biodiversity. Below are guiding questions that may be helpful when debating and drafting resolutions to address the issue of invasive species and their detrimental effect on biodiversity.

What are the most critical regions currently at risk from invasive species? How should UNEP prioritize intervention?
What measures can be implemented to mitigate/prevent the unintentional introduction of invasive species via trade or travel?
How can UNEP support countries with limited resources in monitoring and controlling the spread of invasive species?
What strategies (mechanical, chemical, biological) should be employed to preserve biodiversity and eliminate IAS?
How can the UN combat food insecurity that may arise due to the spread of IAS in key agricultural industries?

Topic 2

Combating the Illegal Wildlife Trade

Key Terms and Acronyms

Legal wildlife trade	The regulated buying, selling, or bartering of wild plants and animals, including body parts and products
Illegal wildlife trade	Synonymous for wildlife trafficking; the commercial trade of wild animals and plants that violates national and international laws
Poaching	The illegal hunting or capturing of wild animals and wild animal body parts
Flora	All plants present in a specific region or environment
Fauna	All animals present in a specific region or environment
Conservation	A practice that ensures sustainable use and management of natural resources in order to secure their availability for future generations
Endangered Species	A plant or animal species at serious risk of extinction
UNODC	The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; works to make countries safer from drugs, crime, terrorism, and corruption by building networks across borders and sharing data
INTERPOL	The International Criminal Police Organization; facilitates international police cooperation to combat transnational crime

Introduction

The illegal wildlife trade, an estimated multi-billion dollar business, is one of the most lucrative illegal industries in the world.[1] Driven by high profit margins, high demand for rare and/or protected species, and a desire to avoid payment duties, this highly organized criminal network has cascading environmental consequences. The illegal wildlife trade reduces the survival probability of vulnerable species and contributes to habitat destruction, thereby threatening biodiversity and weakening entire ecosystems.[2] Consequently, this industry's exploitative nature undermines state conservation efforts and ultimately climate change mitigation efforts.

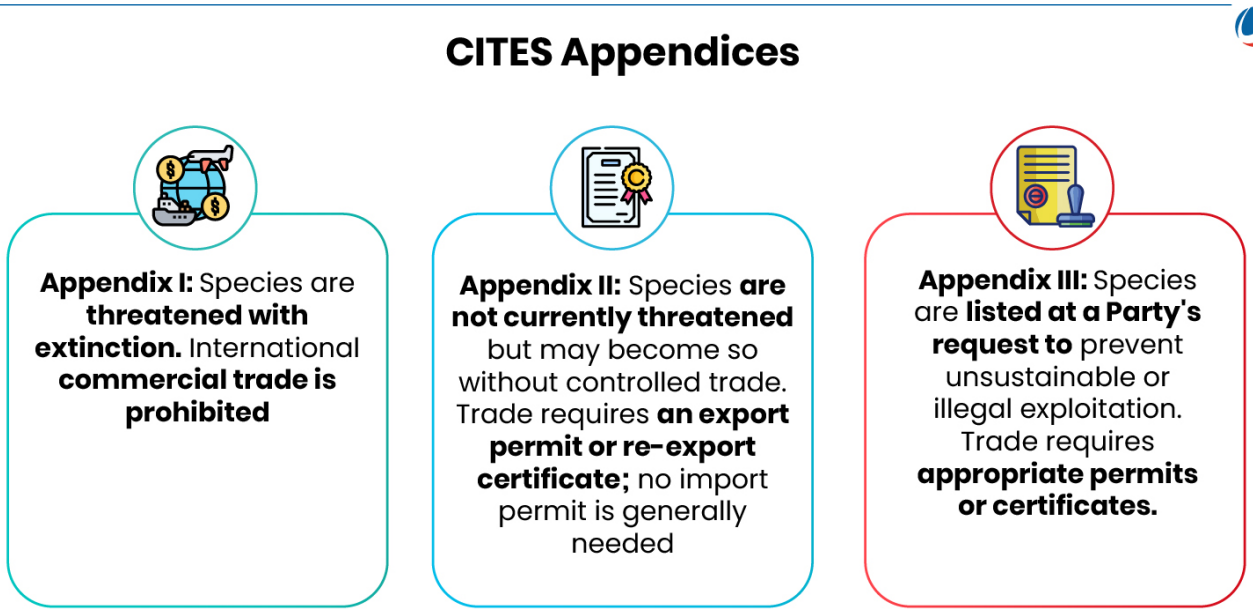
Additionally, gaps in protection–including corruption, toothless laws, weak judicial systems, and light sentences–make the illegal wildlife trade a low risk, high return business.[3] The illegal wildlife trade, like drug trafficking, is operated by highly organized crime networks. Poachers are often the only criminals caught, allowing the trafficking network to remain largely intact and able to strike again.[3] The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes the importance of matching the "adaptability and agility of the illegal wildlife trade" in order to resolve this problem.[4] Thus, identifying and disrupting key financial channels linked to the illegal wildlife trade is imperative in order to tackle this dilemma long term. Additionally, despite extensive collaboration between governments, government partners, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a lack of transparency about the poaching numbers prevents countries from adequately addressing the issue. Currently, only six countries maintain accurate poaching numbers: South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, and India.[5] While it is difficult to obtain precise poaching statistics, it is necessary to explore the implications of implementing more robust methods for reporting and monitoring poaching.

History

1970s: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)

In the mid-twentieth century, governments began to recognize that the unsustainable wildlife trade was driving certain plant and animal species toward extinction. While individual governments could regulate the wildlife trade within their borders, they could not address this issue on an international scale, necessitating an international regulatory document or agency.[7] Thus, in 1973, a collection of 21 states signed

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). Officially launched in 1975, this international agreement protects approximately 40,000 species of animals and plants.[6] To make wildlife trade more traceable and sustainable, CITES representatives congregate every two years to review progress and readjust the list of protected species, which are separated into three categories with varying degrees of protection. CITES remains a "cornerstone of international conservation", using extensive monitoring and regulation to foster



CITES Appendices

more sustainable and traceable trade, ultimately degrading illegal wildlife trade networks.[6] While CITES is legally binding for the 185 participating parties, it does not usurp national law. Rather, it provides a framework for parties to implement domestic legislation that adheres to the ideas outlined in the convention. The deployment of CITES marked a pivotal moment for international conservation efforts; however, since CITES was not intended to be a crime-related convention, it does not mandate that countries criminalize illegal wildlife trade.[8]

2010: International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)

The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), established in 2010, operates on the collective efforts of five partners: the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, and the World Customs Organization (WCO). ICCWC focuses on mobilizing various tools and services to deliver a more coordinated opposition to wildlife criminals.[9] Available resources include Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) for self evaluations, capacity building for wildlife law enforcement, and spearheading/

supporting global and regional operations, most notably, Operation Thunder. Jointly launched by INTERPOL and WCO and backed by ICCWC, this 2017 pilot operation developed into a synchronized annual crackdown on illegal trade in wildlife and timber. The 2017 operation identified 900 suspects and resulted in 1,300 seizures of illegal products, ushering in a new era of more dedicated wildlife enforcement. The momentum from this initial operation carries to the present day, as evidenced by Operation Thunder 2024, which arrested 365 trafficking suspects and identified six transnational wildlife crime networks.[10] Because of ICCWC's work, national authorities are increasingly better equipped to tackle the illegal wildlife trade.

Operation Thunder: Quantity of illegal animals/animal products seizedDigital

2014: A Landmark Year for Confronting Illegal Wildlife Trade

In June 2014, UNEP hosted its first UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA), where delegates dedicated considerable time to discussing the illegal wildlife trade. The resulting ministerial outcome document highlighted a growing sense of urgency surrounding wildlife trafficking, urging states to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illegal business.[8] Additionally, earlier that same year, 42 countries congregated in London and signed the London Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade, ensuring ambitious political commitments from each participating government. This includes supporting CITES' commercial prohibition on the international elephant ivory trade, treating poaching and wildlife trafficking as serious organized crime, and renouncing the use of any products from species threatened with extinction.[11] Furthermore, the London Declaration cemented collective commitments to uplifting nations most impacted by wildlife crime. Canada and Germany, for instance, pledged millions of dollars in support of conservation and wildlife enforcement efforts in Eastern

Carl de Souza/AFP/Getty Images: A Kenya Wildlife Services ranger stands guard around stockpiles of illegally taken elephant tusks that are now being burned

and Central Africa. Furthermore, Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia, Gabon, and Tanzania established the Elephant Protection Initiative, committing all participating governments to a 10-year moratorium on ivory sales and banning the domestic ivory trade. Meanwhile the United Kingdom (UK) pledged £10 million to assist governments, NGOs, and charities in delivering London Declaration outcomes.[11] Ultimately, the London Declaration signified widespread international commitments to exterminating the illegal wildlife trade, ushering in a new era of wildlife crime enforcement.

Current Developments

Rosewood Poaching in West Africa

Rosewood, prized for its color and durability, is the most trafficked wildlife product in the world by value and by volume.[12] For decades, Asian markets have illegally sourced their rosewood from West African nations, most notably The Gambia, Senegal, and Ghana.[13] In March 2022, CITES issued a ban on felling, transporting, and exporting rosewood in all countries where the species was endemic.[14] While many West African nations implemented this ban, traffickers continued to collude with officials, international businesspeople, and local community members to successfully smuggle timber across transnational checkpoints.[14] Limited financial and technological resources hinder West African states from adequately addressing this issue; however, they still try. Specifically, The Gambia has attempted to address rosewood trafficking by collaborating with neighboring countries, publishing a

Gambia's rosewood timber loaded for export

Stacks of rosewood at a timber market in Dongyang, China, a well-known hub for the illegal trade

National Forest Action Plan, and ratifying CITES. However, research suggests that hierarchical corruption, selective enforcement, and ecological and socioeconomic vulnerabilities are key factors that perpetuate the illegal rosewood trade.[15] Additionally, while it is necessary for rosewood-exporting nations to create and enforce solutions, rosewood-importing nations share an equal responsibility in addressing this illegal market.

Jaguar Poaching in South America

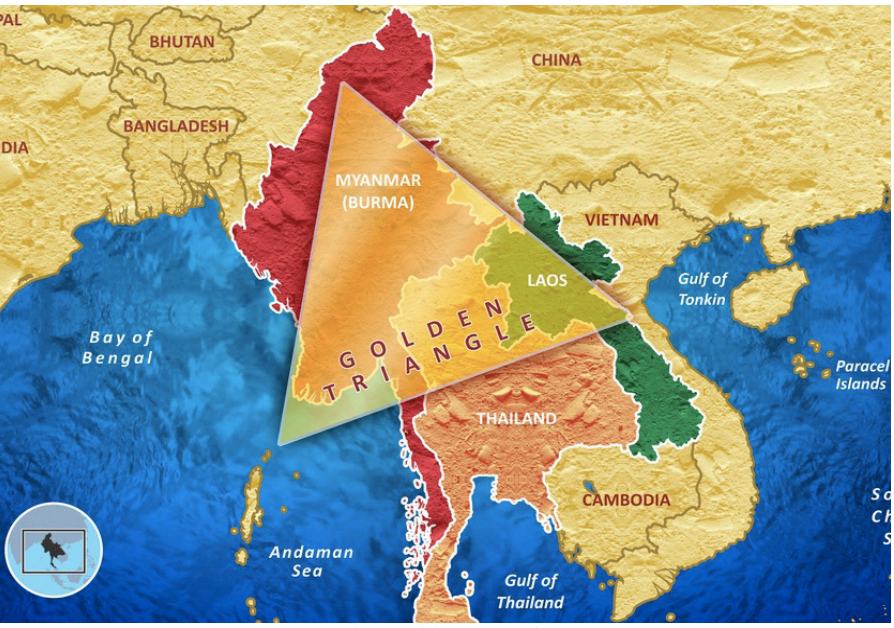
For the first time in almost half of a century, "the largest big cat in the Americas is once again caught in the crosshairs".[16] Jaguars, a highly valued keystone species, are primarily sourced from Bolivia, Peru, Suriname, and other neighboring states.[17] Between 2014-2020 alone, Bolivian officials reportedly seized 700 trafficked

A watchful jaguar in the Pantanal

A park ranger in Bolivia's Madidi National Park shows jaguar teeth confiscated from a Chinese visitor in 2017

jaguar fangs, while Peruvian authorities reported 86 jaguar-associated seizures.[18] Demand for jaguars is primarily derived from Asian markets, and there is evidence of illegal trade routes in the U.S. and Europe, too.[19] However, contrary to other illegal trades, some modern jaguar trafficking, particularly in Mexico, openly occurs on online platforms such as eBay, Facebook, and Etsy.[20] Bolivian policy changes and government partners have worked to strengthen policing capacities as well as online monitoring efforts. Bolivian police emphasize that online monitoring has played a "pivotal role in early detection", while officials of Argentina's Iguazú National Park discuss using Smart technology to map and predict poaching hotspots.[21,22] Responses to the expanding illegal jaguar trade underscore the essential part that technology serves in preventing wildlife trafficking. However, officials note that

the most well-established, sophisticated jaguar trafficking networks occur entirely offline, thus emphasizing the importance of using different approaches for markets at varying scales.[18]



The Golden Triangle

Wildlife Trafficking in Southeast Asia: The Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle–where the borders of Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and China converge–is a major source, transit, and destination hub for the illegal wildlife trade.[23,24] A 2017 report compiled by TRAFFIC–an NGO dedicated to mapping wildlife crime trade routes–identified the 10 most widely trafficked animals in the Golden Triangle: tigers, elephants, pangolins, bears, rhinoceros, serows, guars, leopards, and a variety of turtle species.[25] Though wildlife trafficking in the Golden Triangle boosts the tourism industry, it has dire consequences for local communities. Whether it's through agriculture, fishing, or forestry, populations along the Golden Triangle depend on the local ecosystems for both food and economic security.[26] Ultimately, political instability and corruption are what perpetuate wildlife trafficking in this region; however, various governmental partners and NGOs have voiced a desire to help facilitate change. For instance, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has reportedly united with TRAFFIC and the Wildlife Justice Commission (WJC) to bolster the technical capacity of relevant agencies. By improving law enforcement effectiveness, building key governmental and NGO partnerships, and improving wildlife crime prosecutions, these organizations hope to eradicate the wildlife black market in Southeast Asia.[24] Additionally, policy forums such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and


Illegal wildlife trade in the Greater Mekong region. Image of assortment of animal bones and body parts

Development (OECD) consulted their Task Force On Countering Illicit Trade for relevant policy recommendations. Ultimately, OECD suggested that Golden Triangle countries convene a task force of pertinent officials to design national strategies that: adhere to commitments outlined in international conventions, include policy dialogues to inform legislative and capacity gaps, and foster coordination and cooperation.[27] NGOs stand ready to assist nations of the Golden Triangle in eradicating lawlessness in trade and ultimately drivers of wildlife trafficking.

Directives / QARMAs

How can we identify and disrupt financial channels linked to the illegal wildlife trade?

What steps can be taken to reduce the demand for restricted wildlife products?

How can technology be leveraged to combat the illegal wildlife trade?

How can countries with fewer resources build their wildlife crime enforcement capacity?

To what extent do international trade bans fuel the illegal wildlife trade?

How can we increase transparency in order to make illegal wildlife trade routes more traceable?

How can we ensure that importers are held equally accountable during wildlife crime prosecutions?

What are the primary drivers of wildlife trafficking, and how do those factors perpetuate this illegal trade?

How should we respond to retaliatory killings of endangered animals?

What kind of policy would target transnational crime networks rather than just poachers?

How should we respond to calls for considering culture when addressing the illegal wildlife trade?

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Topic 1

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