



The future of fighting against international wildlife trafficking - The external dimension of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking



Wednesday 13 July 2022 – 14:30 - 16:00 CEST

Online event hosted by MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos

Speakers:

- **MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos**
- **Agata Sobiech**, CITES Team Leader, DG ENV, European Commission
- **Taye Teferi**, Policy and partnership coordinator for Africa, TRAFFIC International
- **Philippe Mayaux**, Team Leader on Biodiversity, DG INTPA, European Commission
- **Tamara Léger**, Global Coordinator, Human Rights and Wildlife Crime, WWF International

Welcome Remarks

MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos

“It is fundamental that the Action Plan continues the discussion with the African Union to implement the EU-WAP”

MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos highlighted the pivotal opportunity of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (EU WAP) in making sure that the EU plays a greater role in the fight against wildlife trafficking. Moving on, **she focused on the external dimension of this plan and particularly on strengthening the global partnership of source, transit, and consumer countries.** In this regard, she stated that *“it is fundamental that the Action Plan continues the discussion with the African Union to implement the EU-WAP”*. For this, clear mechanisms to strengthen dialogue and coordination with African countries, as well as monitoring the implementation of the international dimension of the Action Plan, should be put in place. To conclude, she underlined the need for adequate funding for the implementation of the EU Action Plan.

Keynote remarks

Agata Sobiech, CITES Team Leader, DG ENV, European Commission

“There is a need for the Action Plan to be in line with all relevant EU strategies and coherent and complementary to other instruments”

Ms. Sobiech stated that one clear outcome of the Action Plan is the raising of the profile of wildlife trafficking as a priority issue among a wide range of policymakers. She also stated the increased EU funding for capacity building and international actions against wildlife trafficking as well as the mobilisation of the EU and Member States' diplomatic networks in many third countries. However, she mentioned that some challenges persist such as the constant change over time of trading routes and species but also the impact of wildlife trafficking on local communities. To conclude, she emphasised some ideas for the revised Action Plan. In this regard, **she underlined the need for continued funding to support the fight against illegal wildlife trade, the need to decrease the demand in the EU and elsewhere, and also to make**

sure that the EU supports source countries, especially communities in the management and conservation of wildlife. Finally, she stated that *“there is a need for the Action Plan to be in line with all relevant EU strategies and coherent and complementary to other instruments”*.

Panel Discussion

Taye Teferi, Policy and partnership coordinator for Africa, TRAFFIC International

“The external dimension of the wildlife strategy should be strengthened”

Mr. Teferi emphasised that *“the external dimension of the wildlife strategy should be strengthened”*. Moving on, he mentioned that **a lot of the problem is located outside the EU, specifically for source countries which justifies the strengthening of the external dimension of the Action Plan**. In this regard, he exposed several reasons to focus on strengthening the source countries and hence the external dimension of the Action Plan. There is a need to tackle the problem before it occurs which means tackling the problem at its source. Then, the importance of working with local communities as they are the front line of defense in source countries. In this sense, the EU must provide incentives for the local community to act against wildlife trafficking in order for them to obtain resources-based benefits. To do so, **there is a need for intelligence, science, and technology sharing with other countries**. To conclude, he underlined the need for the Action Plan to recognise the link between illicit financial flows and wildlife crime.

Philippe Mayaux, Team Leader on Biodiversity, DG INTPA, European Commission

“Wildlife trafficking is not only an environmental issue but a development issue”

Mr. Mayaux underlined that *“wildlife trafficking is not only an environmental issue but a development issue”*. For instance, the conservation and management of protected areas could slow down the invasion of jihadism. Moving on, **he emphasised the need for strong collaboration on the global scale as wildlife trafficking is an organised criminal network**. What is more is the importance of ensuring policy dialogue and working with local partners, specifically on law enforcement. Moreover, Mr. Mayaux stated that **the development of economic activities through wildlife tourism could create a link between the management**

of the resources and revenues from communities. Moving on, he emphasised the role of the NaturAfrica initiative composed of a landscape approach in a bid to conserve high biodiversity valued areas, the livelihood of local communities, and improve the governance of anti-poaching and fight against wildlife trafficking.

Tamara Léger, Global Coordinator, Human Rights and Wildlife Crime, WWF International

“Despite the importance of gender thinking, the illegal wildlife trade is predominantly gender blind”

Ms. Léger underlined the **close link between illegal wildlife trade (IWT) and gender**. Indeed, **women and men are engaged differently with environmental and natural resources** and play different roles in IWT either in committing or protecting it. It can also enhance masculinity or femininity. For instance, IWT is a facilitator of sexual violence or prostitution. Moving on, she stated that *“despite the importance of gender thinking, the illegal wildlife trade is predominantly gender blind”*. However, improvements have been made, such as new UN General Assembly resolutions on tackling IWT including gender perspectives, and can be witnessed through the recognition of the right to a healthy environment. **Concerning the revised EU Action Plan, Ms. Léger stated that “gender is not going to solve everything but represents a new opportunity”**. One concrete action of taking into consideration gender is the strengthening of community engagement by ensuring that both women and men participate in decision-making.

Q&A Session

On behalf of TRAFFIC, Moderator Justine Guiny addressed the following question to **Ms. Sobiech**: *“what are your thoughts and takeaways from this discussion?”* **Ms. Sobiech** emphasised the importance of addressing the cooperation between the EU and partner countries in fighting organised crimes. Moreover, she underlined the need to tackle the problem directly from the source countries. Moving on, she stated the relevance of gender perspective to look at different stages of the illegal wildlife trade. Moving on in the discussion, **Moderator Justine Guiny** asked for the panelist’s takeaways. All speakers agreed that **the emphasis has to be on the communities that are at the heart of the issue** and the need to

insist more on the program of local communities, indigenous people, youth, and gender perspectives.

Closing remarks

Taye Teferi, Policy and partnership coordinator for Africa, TRAFFIC International

“The EU Action Plan should be adaptable to respond fast to changing circumstances”

Mr. Teferi emphasised that with regards to wildlife trafficking, a lot revolves around including local communities. Furthermore, he stated that **the criminal syndicate is well organised and adapts very quickly**. In this regard, *“the EU Action Plan should be adaptable to respond fast to changing circumstances”*. Hence, action and intelligence sharing should be intertwined for enforcement objectives.