



Ways forward to tackle illegal wildlife trade – The revised EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking (APAWT)



Wednesday 28 June 2023, 16:15 – 18:00 CEST

Hybrid Event (Brussels, Belgium & Online)

Hosted by MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos

Chair of the Delegation for Relations with the Pan-African Parliament

Speakers:

MEP María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Chair for the Delegation for Relations with the Pan-African Parliament

Jorge Rodríguez Romero, Head of F# Unit on 'Global Environmental Cooperation & Multilateralism', DG ENV, European Commission

Paola Mosig Reidl, Co-lead of data, research, and enforcement support, TRAFFIC

Svein A. Fosså, President, European Pet Organization

Joanna Murray, Cefas (UK Government's Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science)

Edward van Asch, ICCWC Coordinator, Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat

Welcome Remarks

MEP Ms. María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos

“The illegal trade of endangered species is a driver of global biodiversity loss which can lead to their extinction in some habitats; this has cascading effects disturbing the balance of ecosystems.”

MEP Ms. María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos started the event by emphasizing on her concerns with unsustainable and illegal trade in wildlife, and how both the **Nature Restoration Law** and the Convention on international Trade in Endangered Species (**CITES**) are at the nexus of the pressing **conservation and development** concerns. She also highlighted how the illegal trade also affects the **health and wellbeing** of human life, such as by increasing the transmission of **zoonotic diseases**, and provides **illegal and unsustainable streams of income**. **MEP Ms. Rodríguez Ramos** mentioned how all countries globally are affected by illegal wildlife trade, and thus the EU has a **key role** in tackling this issue. She stressed on **cooperation** being the greatest weapon in the efforts tackling illegal wildlife trade, especially in discussing new ways to better address the 4 priorities of the EU’s APAWT.

Jorge Rodriguez Romero, Head of F3 Unit on ‘Global Environmental Cooperation & Multilateralism’, DG ENV, European Commission

“The European Commission is discussing intensely with Member States and stakeholders about the implementation of the new Action Plan, prioritizing in moving all the actions forward.”

Mr. Rodriguez Romero discussed the **European Commission’s new Action Plan** by reminding everyone of illegal wildlife trade’s destructive socio-economic impacts and links to forms of organized crime as a very lucrative low risk/high reward business, and more importantly its critical contribution to biodiversity loss globally. He re-instated the EU’s importance a **global hub for trafficking in wildlife and** stressed on the **4 priorities** including addressing the root causes, strengthening legal framework, enforcing regulations and working on the global level. **Mr. Rodriguez Romero** mentioned the importance of **collective effort** that also includes Member States, other EU actors, international bodies like CITES, and stakeholders. The tracking progress includes building a **light reporting mechanism** and **identifying indicators** to measure the achieved results.

Panel discussion

Paola Mosig Reidl, Co-lead of data, research, and enforcement support, TRAFFIC

“One of the new elements of focus for TRAFFIC’S work is in empowering communities precisely, and fostering right-based approaches and inclusive processes, as well as participatory multi-stakeholder engagements and sustainable supply chains.”

Ms. Mosig Reidl closely discussed **TRAFFIC’S 2030 Strategy** focused on strengthening global **policy frameworks**, strengthening the **design and implementation of national policies**, and establishing **sustainable supply chains**, which involves **empowering concerned local communities**. **Ms. Mosig Reidl** discussed two projects that demonstrate efforts: **the IPBES assessment report on The Sustainable Use of Wild Species** and the **CITES World Wildlife Trade Report**. She highlighted the importance of **constraining less sustainable policy conditions** such as ignoring history, rights and social context, while fostering more sustainable ones that include **tailored democratic and adaptive approaches**. She also discussed Nepal as an example in her presentation: **Jatamansi** which demonstrates efforts in wild plant resources from Nepal Himalayas and highlights the enterprise-oriented forest management. **Ms. Mosig Reidl** mentioned also the **FairWild certification** which has improved consumer confidence and ensured fairer prices for harvesters. She stressed on the **involvement of indigenous peoples and communities** in the decision-making processes and upholding rights to access lands and territories to respect traditional knowledge and practices.

Gayatri Reksodihardjo, LINI Foundation

“LINI’s efforts include empowering coastal communities, providing training in practical skills and promoting fairer trade and more sustainable practices in marine resource use.”

Ms. Reksodihardjo mentioned **Indonesia** being a significant exporter in global marine aquarium trade to over 70 countries, with around 20 million Indonesians depending directly or indirectly on the fishing industry for their livelihoods. She discussed **LINI’s** contribution to the Indonesian **community’s** effort in **collecting and recording catch data, reef restoration**, and the **overall emphasis on aquaculture**. She also mentioned the **forming and strengthening**

fishers' groups which strengthens their capacity to engage with stakeholders, advancing the development of shorter trade chains which subsequently includes **improved prices**. Ms. **Reksodihardjo** concluded by emphasizing the importance of supporting coastal communities and empowering them in resource management and assisting them in understanding the importance of data recording and fishery management.

Svein A. Fosså, President, European Pet Organization

“More than 90 million households in the EU own pets, which supports mental and physical health and promotes interest in animal welfare, biology, and environmental conservation and protection. Also services and products of the pet industry create millions of jobs alone.”

Mr. **Fosså** discussed **the importance of education and better enforcement of existing legislation and arguments against a positive list approach**. He identified EPO's focus on the definition around **exotic pets**, the **suitability** of keeping them, and gave a general view of examples around that. Mr. **Fosså** voiced **EPO's support of EU's Action Plan** since 2016, and elaborated on **the concerns** and efforts taken by EPO in each of the 4 priorities. He explained how the organization does not consider **Positive Lists** to be the most effective of solutions for the **following reasons**: impossibility to find objective criteria, loss of husbandry and keeping expertise because of it, reduction of important diversity and the loss of sustainable sourcing and livelihoods. He concluded his presentation by summing up that **the social value of pet ownership is at risk** due to the positive list.

Joanna Murray, Cefas (UK Government's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science)

“It is important to promote better enforcement of CITES in the global trade in stony corals, it's essential that those involved in inspections can distinguish what to look at.”

M. Murray discussed **the importance of better enforcement of existing legislations** in her presentation, and **the developing of practical tools for monitoring trade** in CITES-listed stony corals. She talked about the challenges with **enforcement and taxonomy** in the coral field, where some traders try to mimic species and appearances in trade. Ms. Murray discussed Cefas bringing several **stakeholders** to share knowledge on **monitoring and managing** trade from UK and Indonesia and develop eventually **a guide**, and the several steps of the process being: identifying taxa in trade, developing groupings, developing genus page content, and

reviewing, adapting and launching. The guide involved a **watchlist** and several ways of using it as well as ways to **detect false mariculture**, and it supports **better enforcement** to be used by **staff at the borders**.

Edward van Asch, ICCWC Coordinator, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Secretariat

“Cooperation is needed at the national level through national relevant agencies, and through regional networks and bodies that enhance the countries’ responsibility in having a common approach. CITES wants to replicate this at the global level.”

Mr. van Asch from the CITES Secretariat discussed **the need for global cooperation to combat wildlife crime and the role of CITES and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC)**. He stressed the importance of **harmonizing efforts** to better deter, detect, detain and dismantle the criminal networks involved in wildlife crime. He explained available ICCWC **assessment tools, guidelines and reports**, and support provided based on needs identified. Mr. van Asch mentioned a number of successes and changes in recent years, including the **prevention of corruption**, now enhanced thanks to a number of support and available tools, showing tangible results. The **prosecutions of wildlife traffickers** have also been enhanced through mentoring and training, and the provision of practical tools and guidelines. He explained the Consortium’s **law enforcement cooperation** and transnational investigations through regional and global operations involving police, customs and relevant wildlife law enforcement authorities, and illustrated several examples of successful investigations. He also highlighted the evolution of data and analytical capabilities to use the data to successfully investigate wildlife crime, demonstrated through the evolution of the countries’ requests.

Q&A

1. *From the EuroGroup for Animals, a question was addressed to Mr. Fosså from EPO & the European Commission concerning the absence of a legal basis for an EU-wide positive list.*

Mr. Fosså answered by focusing on the functionality of positive lists, which has little proof. **Mr. Rodriguez Romero** highlighted the several different angles on what can be identified as a positive list and that the current regime is based on a negative list, which needs to be revised.

2. *One of MEP Ms. Manuela Ripa's assistants asked a question to the EPO concerning how to ensure animal-friendly pet-keeping.*

Mr. Fosså highlighted the little evidence concerning rare exotic species being maltreated, and assured that EPO is increasing expertise in pet trade to better assess the maltreatment of more common pets; it is better to impose restrictions and regulations concerning more popular pets rather than exotic rare species.

3. *A representative of the German Pet Trade and Industry Association asked a question to Ms. Reksodihardjo concerning the growing positive change in attention to coral reefs and how are people trained in aquaculture in Indonesia.*

Ms. Reksodihardjo discussed the growing in a positive behavior, and how for example fishers' involvement in breeding causes growth in appreciation towards nature and the life of the fish. Another example she gave was that reef restorations helped participants understand coral reefs more, and that the availability of training centers and practical skill-development has overall better equipped the community.

4. *Olivier Dominikowski from PRODAF (France) and Vice President of EPO addressed Mr. van Asch about the relevance of creating new tools/ new systems such as a positive list while considering the existing regulatory frameworks into place at international (CITES), EU and national levels. Will such a new tool ensure a better monitored trade?*

Mr. van Asch noted more broadly, regarding controlling crime and illegal trade, in particular of wildlife, that a better enforcement of existing regulations enabling control and traceability can help ensuring commodities are legal and potentially close loopholes that are used to trade illegally.

5. *A representative from Human Society International asked the EPO about the laundering in illegal trade and if they would support a supplementary legislation to criminalize the trade in species that are being taken in violation of the laws in third countries.*

Mr. Fosså answered that EPO would be happy to aid the Commission to look at cases within this context, but the matter is not black and white. **Mr. Rodriguez Romero** added that the Commission is launching a study on the feasibility of legislation to criminalize the trade of fish species illegally taken from 3rd countries and mentioned the EU Timber regulation which provides a precedent on such types of legislation.

Another representative from the German Pet Trade and Industry Association asked whether it's beneficial to share their collected information on legal and illegal pet-owning and border control.

Mr. van Asch expressed that guidance and information sharing is always beneficial to local authorities and encouraged to share any information on possible illegal trade with their relevant national authorities.