



General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 July 2021

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 14

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/343](#), on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. The report provides an overview of the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade, contains information on the implementation of resolution [73/343](#) and also contains proposals for possible future action.



I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution [73/343](#) on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution to it at its seventy-fifth session, taking into account Economic and Social Council resolution [2013/40](#). In addition, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade, and to make proposals for possible future action.
2. The international community has recognized the worrying scale and scope of trafficking in wildlife and the need for international cooperation in tackling it. The General Assembly, in its resolutions [69/314](#), [70/301](#), [71/326](#) and [73/343](#), expressed concern about the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of poaching and wildlife trafficking and encouraged Member States to take action to counter such phenomena. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution [55/25](#), expressed its strong conviction that the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime would constitute an effective tool and the necessary legal framework for international cooperation in combating trafficking in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.
3. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolutions 2003/27, 2008/25, 2011/36 and [2013/40](#), and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in its resolutions 16/1, 23/1 and 28/3, also called for international cooperation and crime prevention and criminal justice responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife.
4. The United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its resolutions 1/3 and 2/14, recognized the adverse economic, social and environmental impact of the illegal trade in wildlife and strongly encouraged Member States to take measures to combat it.
5. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all Member States to take action towards sustainable development. With regard to tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, several targets are interrelated and particularly important. Target 15.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals is to take urgent action to end poaching of and trafficking in protected species of flora and fauna and to address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products. Target 15.c is to enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching of and trafficking in protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities. Target 16.3 is to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
6. The present report is based on information shared by Member States, United Nations entities and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime. The Consortium is a collaborative effort of the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

II. Global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade

7. The second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report: Trafficking in Protected Species*, published by UNODC in July 2020, contained an update on the main global trends in the trafficking of wild fauna and flora since the previous report was published in 2016. On the basis of valuations by UNODC of wildlife products, the largest illegal flows identified were similar to those in the 2016 report, with rosewood, ivory, rhinoceros horn, reptiles and pangolin scales representing the largest illegal flows. The major difference since 2016 is a change in the relative prominence of some species. For example, there has been a tenfold increase in the number of whole pangolin equivalents seized since 2014, making the pangolin the third largest illegal

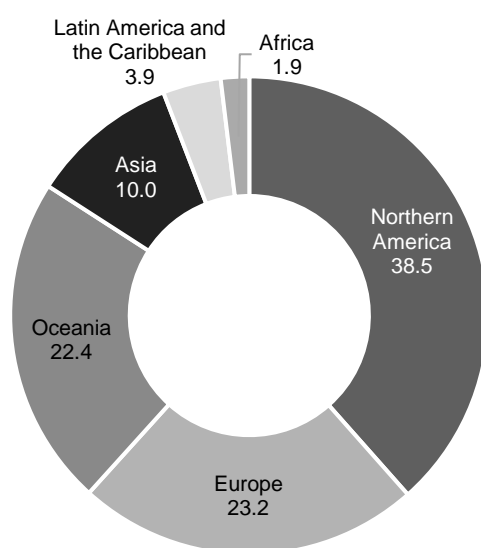
flow behind rosewood and ivory. Meanwhile, big cat species are now valued as the seventh largest flow for the illegal wildlife trade. This prompted the inclusion of a chapter in the latest report on the tiger bone trade and its links to trafficking in other big cat products.

8. The second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report* was produced using data from the World Wildlife Seizures (World WISE) database, created and maintained by UNODC. The updated database, World WISE 2.0, now includes details of more than 200,000 wildlife contraband seizures from 148 countries and territories. Since 2016, UNODC has compiled the data primarily from the annual illegal trade reports that States parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora are required to provide. From 2016 to 2018, these annual illegal trade reports led to the inclusion of over 42,600 seizure records in the World WISE database, representing around 1,500 species in various product formats. Although some countries are underrepresented in seizure data for a variety of reasons, including a lack of reporting capacity and political will to treat wildlife crime as serious crime, the World WISE database is one of the largest official seizure databases available on wildlife crime. Figure I illustrates the regional source of seizures contained in the World WISE database from 1999 to 2018.

Figure I

Regional source of seizures in World WISE database

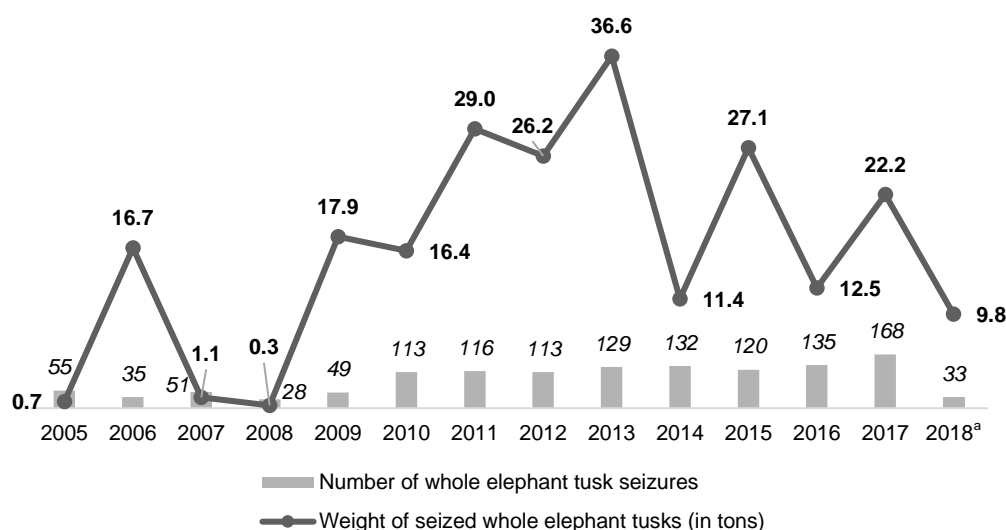
(Percentage)



Source: UNODC World WISE database.

9. The illegal trade in protected wildlife covers a range of species, with the most traded species varying according to consumer demand and species availability. Although trafficking in pangolins has increased significantly since 2014, the markets for ivory and rhinoceros horn appear to be declining. For ivory, poaching numbers have declined since 2011, as has the overall volume of seizures since 2013. Concurrent declines in prices paid on both sides of the Indian Ocean since 2014, with fewer whole tusks and large carved ivory objects for sale in markets in South-East and East Asia, also suggest that demand is declining. Consumer demand surveys in both these regions appear to confirm this, with consumers reporting a reduced interest in buying ivory because they see the practice as shameful. While there are several possible explanations for this downward trend, it seems likely that at least part of the decline can be attributed to tightened market controls, including domestic ivory bans (see figure II).

Figure II
**Weight of elephant tusk seizures and total number of seizures recorded in
 World WISE database, 2005–2018**



Source: UNODC World WISE database.

^a The figures for 2018 are based on partial data.

10. In the second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report*, the issue of geographical and species displacement was highlighted. As enforcement measures tighten in certain parts of the world, there are commensurate shifts in source, transit and destination countries. Traffickers are choosing to move their activities to areas with less coordinated or less effective law enforcement efforts, sometimes stockpiling products like pangolin scales in nearby non-source countries where the risk of detection is lower. In the case of reptile trafficking, traffickers shift their sales to different social media and encrypted messaging platforms as law enforcement agencies shut down their online communities – a virtual geographical displacement of sorts. Given the ease of use of online platforms, these traffickers are able to reassemble rapidly on other platforms, often with the same group names and membership, posing a challenge for law enforcement agencies as they try to identify and legally shut down these online sales points. In addition to geographical displacement, species displacement is also commonplace. For instance, the years 2019 and 2020 saw a rise in joint shipments of ivory and pangolin scales, with progressively larger ratios of scales to tusks. Traffickers seem to be capitalizing on pangolin trafficking as a more lucrative activity than ivory trafficking, given declining prices for ivory. A similar species displacement trend appears to exist for lion bone, whose trade feeds into the Asian tiger bone market as a supplementary species. These substitutions may be explicit, or buyers may not be aware that they are buying products made of lion rather than tiger bone.

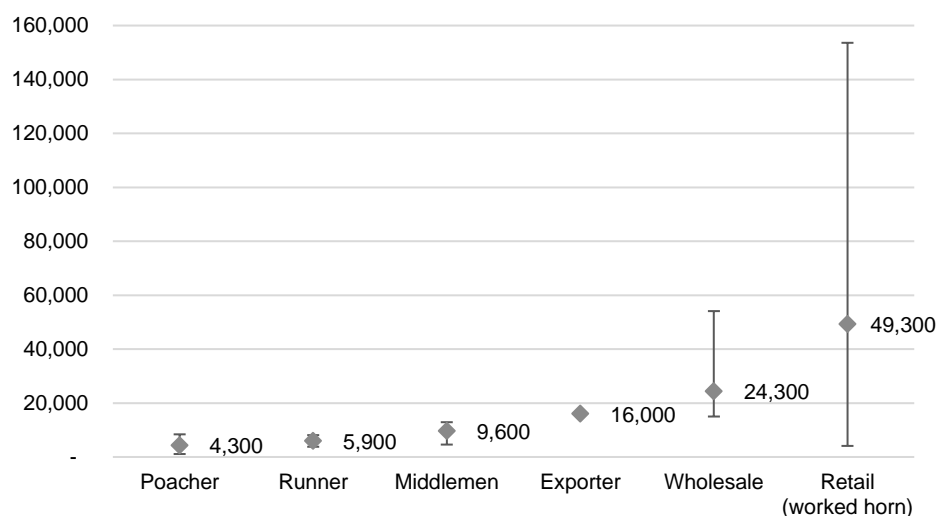
11. Corruption remains a key driver of the illegal wildlife trade. For example, bribes make up 4 to 10 per cent of the final wholesale value of ivory in Asia. The second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report* estimated the annual illicit income generated by trafficking in ivory and rhinoceros horn to be \$400 million and \$230 million, respectively. The largest proportion of profits are made on the destination end of the supply chain owing to the large price increase between wholesaler and retailer in the destination country. Source countries rarely profit from the species leaving their borders through the illegal wildlife trade. From a law enforcement perspective, understanding this illicit income and these illicit financial flows is crucial to identifying where the highest profits are made along the trafficking chain. In the case of ivory and rhinoceros horn, this is at the point of export, highlighting the need for increased enforcement and scrutiny of exporters. Meanwhile, for other species like European eel and rosewood, which are often laundered through the legal supply chain, corruption remains a major driver of the

illegal trade and requires additional efforts to ensure that legal markets are not co-opted for illegal purposes.

Figure III

Variation in price data for rhinoceros horn, by trade level, multi-year average, 2014–2018

(United States dollars)



Source: UNODC estimates based on data collected in 52 field interviews and available literature (poacher to exporter) and on data provided by the Wildlife Justice Commission and the Environmental Investigation Agency of the United Kingdom (wholesale to retail). Midpoints are a simple average of all observations (weighted by weight where available). To increase sample sizes and coverage, data from 2016 to 2018 were supplemented with data from earlier years.

Note: Ranges reflect varying degrees of uncertainty.

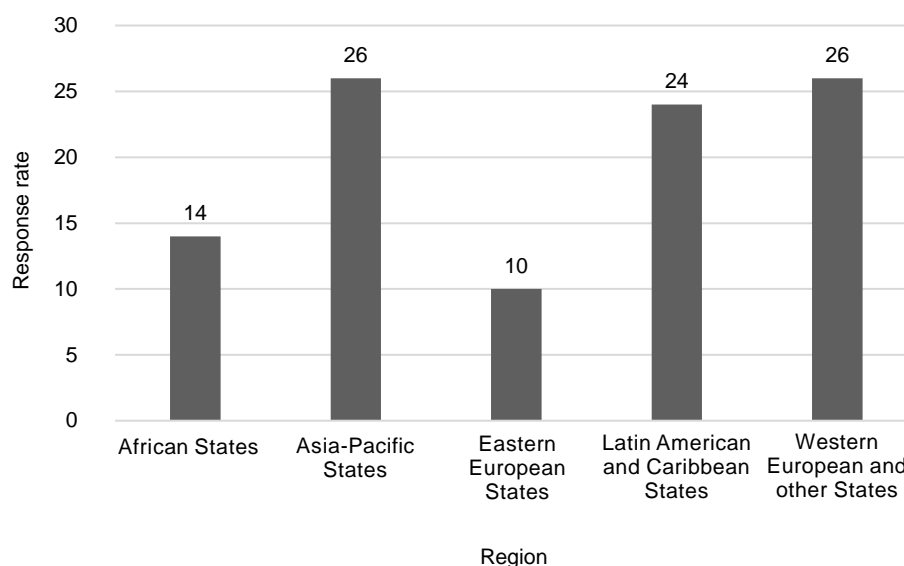
III. Implementation of General Assembly resolution [73/343](#)

12. In its resolution [73/343](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the implementation of that resolution. The present section was produced on the basis of responses to a questionnaire sent to Member States in a note verbale transmitted by the Secretariat on 9 December 2020. In total, 42 Member States returned the questionnaire.¹ All regions were represented, with 6 responses received from African States, 11 from Asia-Pacific States, 4 from Eastern European States, 10 from Latin American and Caribbean States and 11 from Western European and other States.

¹ Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Cameroon, Canada, Chad, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Kuwait, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Uruguay and Yemen.

Figure IV
Member State responses, by geographical region

(Percentage)



13. The Secretariat also requested, through electronic correspondence on 15 December 2020, information from relevant United Nations entities on the implementation of the resolution. Responses were received from the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and UNODC. These responses were incorporated into the present report together with information submitted by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime.

A. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/343 by States

14. In its resolution 73/343, the General Assembly acknowledged that the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime could provide valuable technical assistance in strengthening enforcement and criminal justice responses to illicit trade in wildlife, including through supporting Member States in the implementation of the *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit*. The *Toolkit* and the accompanying Indicator Framework are technical resources that assist Member States in reviewing the effectiveness of their criminal justice and preventive response to wildlife and forest crime. UNODC leads the implementation of the *Toolkit* and Indicator Framework on behalf of the Consortium, in response to an official request for assistance from a Member State. To date, the Consortium has received requests to implement the *Toolkit* from 33 Member States. The Consortium has partnered with national authorities to complete *Toolkit* assessments in Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, the Congo, Gabon, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam. The Indicator Framework complements the *Toolkit* and enables Member States to independently monitor performance over time and to identify changes in the effectiveness of their law enforcement responses. Indicator Framework assessments have been completed in Angola, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, the Philippines, Thailand and Uganda. Implementation of the *Toolkit* and Indicator Framework is under way in a further eight countries. The Consortium continued to implement recommendations stemming from these national analyses, subject to funding.

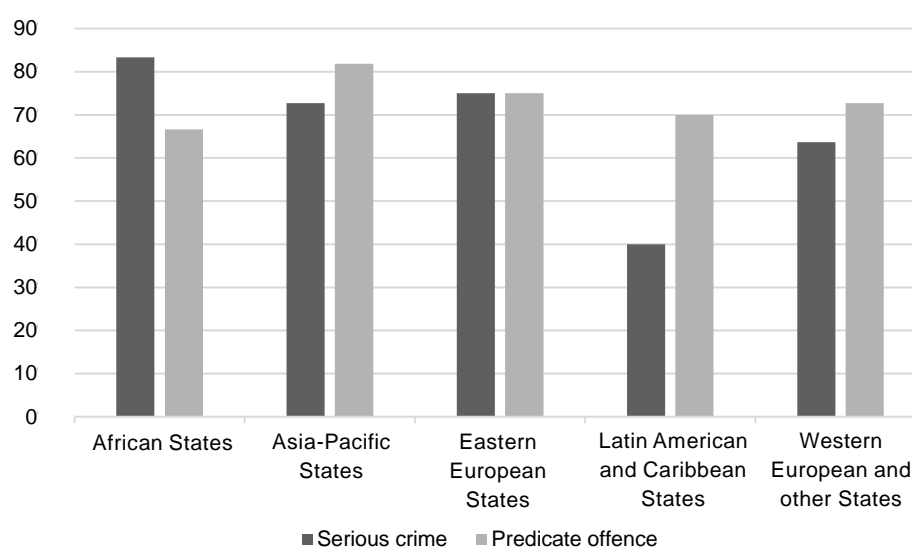
15. The General Assembly called upon Member States to make illicit trafficking in protected species of wild fauna and flora involving organized criminal groups a serious crime. Article 2, paragraph (b), of the Organized Crime Convention defines a crime as serious when it is "punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at

least four years or a more serious penalty”. Throughout the present report, the term “serious crime” is used in that sense. The Organized Crime Convention also provides Member States with a framework for providing mutual legal assistance in investigations into and the prosecution of serious crimes. The majority (34) of responding Member States reported that illicit trafficking in wildlife was a criminal offence in their jurisdictions. In almost 70 per cent (29) of Member States, illicit trafficking in wildlife was otherwise sanctioned, for example as an administrative or civil matter. Approximately two thirds (27) of Member States reported that illicit trafficking in wildlife was a serious crime in their jurisdictions, meaning that illicit trafficking in wildlife was not treated as a serious crime under national legislation in approximately one third of responding Member States.

Figure V

Percentage of responding Member States considering trafficking in wildlife a serious crime or predicate offence, by region

(Percentage)



16. Member States were urged to take decisive steps to prevent, combat and eradicate the illegal trade in wildlife, including by strengthening their legislation and regulations. Seven Member States reported that they had enacted new legislation related to illicit trafficking in wildlife. For example, China had introduced a ban on the consumption of terrestrial wildlife products for food. A dozen Member States had amended their legislation, including in order to incorporate decisions made at the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Just over a third (15) of responding Member States reported that they had introduced new regulations.

17. The General Assembly called upon Member States to review and amend national legislation, as necessary and appropriate, so that offences connected to the illegal trade in wildlife were treated as predicate offences, as defined in the Organized Crime Convention. Approximately three quarters (31) of responding Member States indicated that illicit trafficking in wildlife was considered a predicate offence.

18. Member States were also called upon to integrate, as appropriate, the investigation of financial crimes linked to wildlife trafficking into wildlife crime investigations and increase the use of financial investigation techniques. In the majority (26) of responding Member States, the investigation of financial or economic crimes linked to illicit trafficking in wildlife was not part of standard procedure.

19. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to make use of legal instruments available at the national level to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. Ten Member States reported using legislation related to money-laundering to prosecute trafficking in wildlife. Ten Member States had used corruption-related legislation, including for cases involving bribery and misuse of influence in public

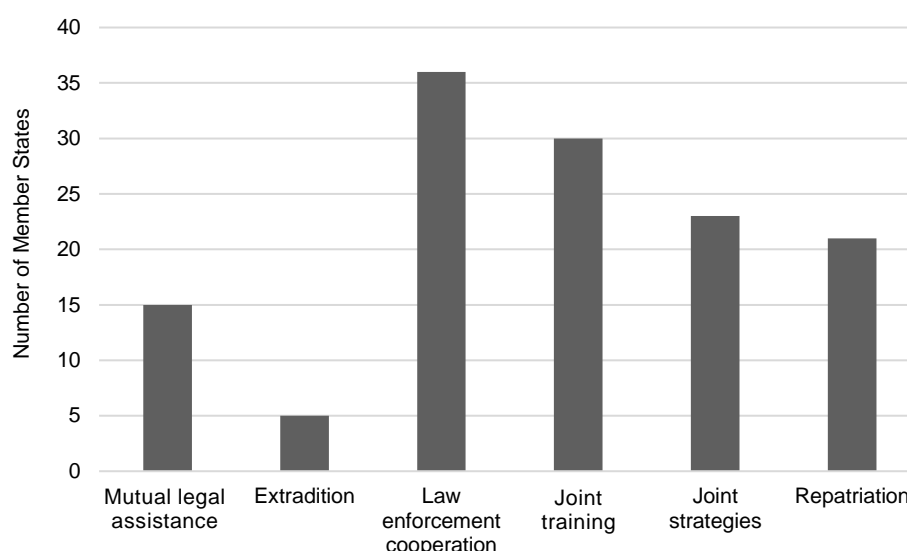
administration. Ten Member States had used fraud-related legislation, including for cases involving fraudulent Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora permits, falsified personal identification documents, misdeclaration on customs documentation and forged veterinary documents. Fourteen Member States reported using financial crime legislation and three Member States reported using racketeering legislation for the prosecution of illicit trafficking in wildlife.

20. Member States were encouraged to harmonize their judicial, legal and administrative regulations to support the exchange of evidence regarding, and criminal prosecution of, illicit trafficking in wildlife. A total of 40 per cent (17) of responding Member States reported that they had introduced new measures to harmonize judicial, legal and administrative regulations. In China, for example, the national judicial, procuratorate, court and police departments had issued guidance on handling wildlife crime. Three Member States indicated that analyses of existing legislative regulations were under way.

21. The General Assembly urged Member States to increase the exchange of information and knowledge among national authorities as well as among Member States and international crime authorities. More than three quarters of responding Member States reported enhanced information-sharing related to illicit trafficking in wildlife (34 shared information among national authorities; 32 with regional bodies; 36 with international bodies; and 33 with civil society).

22. The General Assembly strongly encouraged Member States to cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels. When asked whether information on a case of illicit trafficking in wildlife had been shared with another State, 15 Member States responded that they had engaged in mutual legal assistance, although only five Member States had been involved in related extradition proceedings. Slovakia reported using European Investigation Orders more regularly than mutual legal assistance. The vast majority (86 per cent) of Member States reported engaging in law enforcement cooperation in cases of illicit trafficking in wildlife, for example, through networks, joint operations and patrols, and through exchange of information using INTERPOL and other channels. On the operational side of law enforcement cooperation, Chad and the Central African Republic reported that they had established a mixed brigade to fight wildlife crime. Over 70 per cent (30) of responding Member States reported engaging in joint training involving multiple agencies and/or multiple countries and regions. More than half (23) of responding Member States had developed joint strategies, including with neighbouring countries, at a regional level, and species-specific strategies.

Figure VI

Measures taken by Member States to cooperate internationally

23. The General Assembly invited Member States to support the efforts of developing countries to step up action to tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. A small number (6) of responding Member States reported that they had provided financial assistance in that regard. A larger number (17) reported that they had provided capacity-building support to developing countries, including through the delivery of training courses, support for local communities and laboratories, the conduct of joint seminars and anti-corruption initiatives, the funding of public awareness-raising campaigns and support for alternative livelihood initiatives.

24. Member States were called upon to prohibit, prevent and counter any form of corruption that facilitated illicit trafficking in wildlife. Approximately two thirds of Member States reported that they had taken measures to prohibit (27), prevent (25) and counter (23) corruption. Many Member States indicated that their existing anti-corruption laws applied to all forms of corruption, including corruption linked to trafficking in wildlife. In order to prevent corruption, Member States had engaged in efforts to increase the transparency of processes and procedures, introduced supervision requirements for certain processes and conducted awareness-raising initiatives to inform officials of infractions and related penalties. In the Philippines, all government offices were required to install closed-circuit television cameras to capture transactions in an effort to prevent corruption. Some Member States reported using an electronic permit system for Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora permits. In order to counter corruption, Member States reported that they had organized training for law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges on how to investigate and prosecute corruption offences. In Egypt and South Africa, hotlines were in place for reporting wildlife crime and corruption, respectively, and in Paraguay a reporting portal for corruption cases had recently been created.

25. Member States were encouraged to take measures to make permit systems more resilient to corruption. According to information from the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, there had been increasing interest from parties in moving towards fully automated and electronic permit processes. After a slow uptake, more than a dozen parties now had some form of electronic Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora permit system in place, and approximately 30 additional countries were in the process of developing such systems to be launched soon.

26. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to list protected species that may become threatened as a result of international trade in appendix III of the

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. According to the secretariat of the Convention, four Member States had requested the listing of additional species in appendix III since resolution 73/343 had been adopted: Cuba, Japan, Sri Lanka and Ukraine.

27. Member States were also encouraged to take appropriate measures to enforce the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, including measures to penalize trade in and/or possession of illegally traded specimens. According to the secretariat of the Convention, 106 parties had national laws that were considered to generally meet the requirements for the implementation of the Convention. Approximately 40 more parties had legislation in place that made it illegal to trade in species listed in the Convention in violation of the Convention and national legislation. This suggests that approximately 20 per cent of parties to the Convention do not have legislation in place that makes it illegal to trade in listed species in violation of the Convention.

28. The General Assembly also encouraged Member States to enhance their enforcement efforts, including through recording and monitoring both seizures and successful prosecutions. Member States introduced a range of measures to improve data collection and research related to illicit trafficking in wildlife. Approximately two thirds (28) of Member States reported that they had established, maintained and improved databases on seizures, as well as shared seizure information on relevant platforms such as the Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange and as part of the annual illegal trade report of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Some Member States did not report having improved recording and monitoring because, for example, they already met the requirements of the Convention and at the European Union level. Over half (24) of responding Member States reported that they had improved their recording and monitoring of wildlife investigations. Although some countries had case monitoring systems in place, others did not. In Indonesia, case files had been digitalized. In Israel, a new Cybertracker system had been established to coordinate all data recorded by rangers. Several (17) Member States reported that they had improved their recording and monitoring of wildlife prosecutions. Capacities varied, with some Member States reporting high-tech database systems and others scanning documents to electronic filing systems. Still others were in the process of testing and introducing new software and some were developing standard formats for registering criminal proceedings. China reported that some court proceedings could now be watched online, and verdicts dating back to 2014 were available online to the public.

29. The General Assembly called upon Member States to recognize the importance of research and investment in tools, data analysis and funding to understand the supply and demand issues related to illegal wildlife products. Almost half (20) of responding Member States reported that they had invested in new research tools or projects, including online species identification tools, wildlife forensic capacity-building or tools for risk analysis. The Philippines had developed a mobile application that aided front-line personnel in identifying wildlife species and reporting wildlife crimes. In Spain, the “Traffic Finder” tool automated searches for the sale of protected species through the Internet. Several (15) Member States reported that they had invested in data analysis; for example, using software for intelligence and risk analysis. Member States reported collecting and communicating analysis reports to relevant officials for the purposes of prevention activities, risk profiling, enforcement training, awareness-raising, national reporting, proposals for funding and national policymaking processes. In the Philippines, for example, a map of wildlife crime hotspots had been created using data collected on wildlife seizures. In South Africa, data had been used in anti-poaching efforts and wildlife crime investigations in order to identify trends and support strategic decision-making.

30. Member States were urged to increase efforts and resources to raise awareness about illicit wildlife trafficking. The vast majority (88 per cent) of Member States reported that they had conducted or supported awareness-raising campaigns on wildlife trafficking. Almost 70 per cent (29) of Member States had conducted

campaigns focused on supply reduction, while 26 Member States had conducted campaigns focused on demand reduction. The majority (35) of Member States had conducted campaigns to raise awareness of laws prohibiting illegal trade in wildlife and associated penalties. Campaigns had involved printed materials such as leaflets, brochures, posters and stickers. Member States reported displaying and distributing materials at entry and exit points, such as at airports and border crossings. For example, Egypt reported that its management authority under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was working with airport authorities to distribute wildlife management regulations and warning leaflets to passengers in order to raise awareness among travellers. Member States had also conducted traditional media and social media campaigns and published information about wildlife crime investigations and prosecutions. Member States also reported engaging in community education programmes and delivering training to raise awareness. In Peru, for example, training had been delivered to vendors in marketplaces to inform them of the penalties for selling protected species. In Slovenia, campaigns had engaged with youth populations, and in Myanmar, campaigns had targeted souvenir shops and restaurants.

31. The General Assembly called upon Member States to ensure that legal domestic markets for wildlife products were not used to mask the trade in illegal wildlife products. The vast majority (38) of Member States reported that they conducted monitoring and inspection of wildlife markets and facilities. Some Member States mentioned that the regularity of inspections was limited by the resources available. Many Member States reported that compulsory registration obligations were set out in the relevant domestic legislation on wildlife. In more than half (27) of Member States, confiscated wildlife specimens were destroyed in accordance with national legislation. In Singapore, for example, confiscated elephant ivory was destroyed at publicly announced events. In the European Union, there was legislation in place for the destruction of animal by-products and seized illegal wildlife products were regularly destroyed by customs officials. Approximately half (22) of responding Member States reported using various forensic techniques to monitor legal domestic markets, including paternity testing, DNA barcoding, carbon dating to determine the age of ivory and rhinoceros horn, DNA testing to determine species, as well as DNA and isotope techniques to determine provenance. The majority (33) of responding Member States reported monitoring online trade as a means of monitoring legal domestic trade. Many examples provided by Member States related to the monitoring of popular platforms for activities suspected of being linked to the illegal wildlife trade and the following-up of those activities with investigations. Some Member States reported conducting social media cyberpatrols rather than continuous monitoring. Approximately three quarters (31) of responding Member States reported undertaking investigations and operations to identify illegal activities at legal wildlife markets, including antique markets, pet shops, shops selling legal wildlife products and breeding facilities. In Colombia, for example, the Attorney General's Office carried out law enforcement operations in legal markets where wildlife trafficking was suspected. Eleven Member States reported that they had closed legal domestic markets for wildlife. For example, South Africa had prohibited certain specimens of rhinoceros horn, such as horn drillings and small pieces of horn that could not be marked. China had imposed a temporary national moratorium on the wildlife trade in January 2020.

32. At the eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, parties that had not prohibited commercial trade in raw and worked ivory on their domestic markets were requested to report on measures taken to ensure that their domestic ivory markets were not contributing to poaching or illegal trade. The secretariat of the Convention received reports from the European Union (on behalf of its 27 member States), Israel, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe. All parties reported on the implementation of provisions contained in Conference resolution 10.10 on trade in elephant specimens. In addition, parties reported that they were strengthening the implementation and

enforcement of legal provisions and raising awareness about these provisions. Israel subsequently introduced new bans on domestic and international trade.

33. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to facilitate professional standards and mutual monitoring programmes on supply chain security to prevent the introduction of illegally sourced wildlife into legal trade chains. More than half (25) of responding Member States reported that they had developed professional standards such as compulsory DNA sampling of rhinoceros horn, marking of illegal wildlife samples, registration breeding operations under appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and paternity testing of certain captive-bred species. Some Member States reported conducting training of front-line personnel on standard protocols for handling illegally traded wildlife. Almost one third (13) of Member States reported engaging in mutual monitoring programmes. A total of 40 per cent (17) of responding Member States reported conducting audits, including of traders' stocks of pre-Convention Convention-listed specimens and government-owned stockpiles. In Canada, routine inspections of the food supply chain were conducted for endangered species and their products, including glass eels and sturgeon/caviar. Only seven Member States reported the use of integrity mechanisms for supply chain security. In one example provided, the customs department of India was reported to conduct supplier profiling in observance of "know your supplier" requirements. More than 40 per cent (18) of Member States reported conducting risk assessments to ensure supply chain security. Some Member States reported that their customs service conducted continuous risk assessments on import and export data for supply chain security. Germany reported the use of supply chain verification mechanisms in Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade partner countries, including risk assessments and regular inspections of timber traders. Norway included illegally obtained wildlife in its police threat assessments.

34. The General Assembly encouraged Member States to enhance cooperation for the timely and cost-efficient repatriation of live illegally traded wildlife. Half of Member States (21) responded that they had engaged in the repatriation of live illegally traded wildlife, with some Member States noting that it was a challenging process. The secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was developing guidance for the safe and secure handling of live seized and confiscated animals, including during repatriation.

35. The General Assembly recognized the efforts of the African Union and of the expert group for the implementation of the African Strategy on Combating Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa. These efforts continued, including through the convening of regional forums to raise awareness of the Strategy and its monitoring tool. The African Union also embarked on efforts to mainstream and engage African youth in wildlife conservation through consultative dialogues and joint webinar sessions. The African Union Commission presented a report on the impacts and challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and wildlife trade in Africa to a special session of ministers responsible for environment and natural resources on the challenges and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, convened in November 2020.

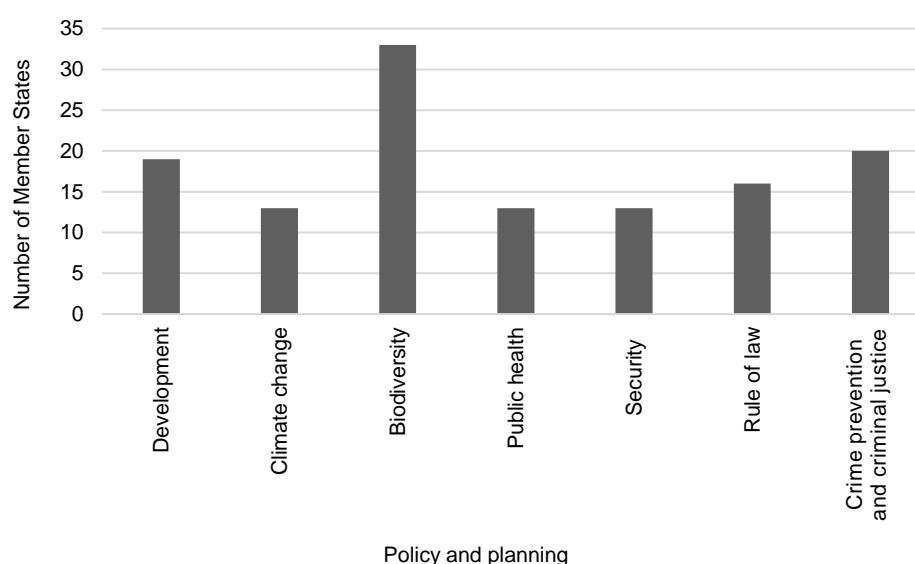
36. Member States were strongly encouraged to increase the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities and enhance support for alternative livelihoods. Half (21) of Member States reported engaging in community-led wildlife conservation initiatives. Some Member States reported the appointment of wildlife ambassadors or community guardians as part of community-led wildlife conservation initiatives. In Indonesia, new conservation areas were established and assistance provided to local villages. In the Philippines, biodiversity-friendly alternative livelihoods were supported, including through the creation of bamboo products. A total of 43 per cent of Member States reported that they engaged in public-private partnerships. In Mexico, public-private collaboration strategies were in place both in protected areas and other federal or community lands. In India, corporations supported wildlife preservation as part of corporate

environmental responsibility initiatives. Several (17) Member States reported implementing sustainable tourism programmes, including ecotourism as an alternative livelihood for local communities, as well as awareness-raising programmes for tourists such as the “Stop Animal Selfies” campaign developed in Costa Rica. Over a third (14) of responding Member States reported engaging in revenue-sharing agreements, and a small number of examples were provided whereby local communities retained income or other benefits related to wildlife conservation. Almost half (20) of Member States reported enhancing the rights and capacities of local communities, including through the delivery of wildlife conservation training.

37. The integration of measures to address illegal trade in wildlife into development policy and planning was encouraged by the General Assembly. Figure VII illustrates the proportion of Member States that integrated measures to address illicit wildlife trafficking into policy and planning related to development, climate change, biodiversity, public health, security, rule of law and crime prevention and criminal justice. The majority (33) of responding Member States reported integrating measures into biodiversity policy and planning, although most of the responding Member States did not integrate measures to address illicit wildlife trafficking across other sectors. Some Member States reported that there was a new awareness of the need to address illicit trafficking in wildlife as part of public health policy and planning, in recognition of the fact that it might be a means of preventing future pandemics.

Figure VII

Integration of measures to address illegal trade in wildlife into cross-sectoral policy and planning



38. With regard to the greatest challenge in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in wildlife, a range of common issues were identified. Member States described weak legislation, inadequate penalties and a lack of understanding of the seriousness of wildlife crime. Identification of wildlife specimens was another common challenge, with insufficient evidence and lack of wildlife forensic capacity reported as hampering investigations and prosecutions. Insufficient human and financial resources were repeatedly identified as factors constraining national efforts to address wildlife trafficking. Responses were hindered by a lack of knowledge across national institutions, including law enforcement authorities, and Member States noted the difficulties of enforcement in remote areas. Corruption and falsified documents were reported as compounding these difficulties. National authorities reported that they were concerned about online trade and the use of parcel and courier mail to transport illegal wildlife and wildlife products. International cooperation remained a challenge, with Member States highlighting the underutilization of the Organized Crime Convention and difficulties in identifying the appropriate points of contact in other countries.

39. Since the adoption of resolution [73/343](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, severely impacting societies and economies and negatively affecting global health, socioeconomic development and national security. The Secretariat gathered information on how the pandemic had impacted wildlife trafficking and how Member States had responded through a questionnaire circulated in a note verbale.

40. More than half (23) of Member States reported that there had been changes in poaching trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Experiences differed widely across countries and regions. For example, there had been a decrease in rhinoceros poaching in South Africa during the national lockdown; however, in some parts of the country, poaching of smaller game species had increased, likely owing to the economic impact of the pandemic on local communities. The Philippines reported an increase in poaching of plants as an alternative source of income, as well as a preferred alternative to animal poaching owing to fear of zoonotic diseases. Other Member States experienced an increase in poaching as a result of a lack of enforcement, with officials redeployed to tend to public health issues. Some Member States indicated that it was too soon to assess any pandemic-related impacts on poaching. More than half (23) of Member States reported a change in the number or frequency of patrols. In the majority of those States, the number of patrols had decreased as a result of, inter alia, redeployment and reduced resources. In some Member States, officials had focused on monitoring online trade during national lockdowns, as opposed to conducting in-person patrols and inspections. A decline in tourism had significantly reduced financial resources available for the conservation of wildlife in some African States. In other Member States, resources had been reallocated to support the handling of the pandemic. Some Member States reported that travel restrictions, rather than the availability of resources, had impeded their ability to prevent and combat wildlife crime.

41. A total of 60 per cent (25) of Member States reported a decrease in the number of wildlife seizures during the pandemic. Approximately one third of Member States reported a change in the number of investigations (29 per cent) and prosecutions (33 per cent), mostly comprising a decrease in numbers. In Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru, however, an increase in prosecutions was reported. Approximately one third (13) of Member States reported a change in trafficking routes as a result of the pandemic. Member States reported that the closure of borders and the reduction in air travel had affected trafficking routes. Singapore and Sweden had observed increases in postal shipments of illegal wildlife products, for example, through air cargo and parcel post. Over 40 per cent (18) of Member States reported an increase in online sales of illegal wildlife products, with some mentioning that this shift had been evident prior to the pandemic. Some Member States reported that it was too early to make assessments of the changes caused by COVID-19.

42. Overall, the majority of Member States did not report introducing new measures to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately one third (14) of Member States reported launching awareness-raising campaigns; however, only Egypt and Germany described campaigns related specifically to zoonoses or links between illicit wildlife trafficking and the pandemic. A small number (7) of Member States reported introducing new policies to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife in response to the pandemic. In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, environmental regulations for COVID-19 were introduced and in Belgium, a national taskforce on sustainable wildlife trade and bushmeat was set up and an action plan was being prepared. Six Member States reported that they had introduced new legislation to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife in response to the pandemic. In the Philippines, a provision on biosafety was included in the proposed amendment to the national Wildlife Act in response to COVID-19. One third (14) of Member States reported that they had introduced new enforcement approaches as a result of the pandemic. These included increased Internet surveillance and the virtual delivery of enforcement training. In Myanmar, illegal activities in protected areas were monitored using hidden and trap cameras. A small number (7) of Member States reported that

they had introduced new alternative livelihood measures in response to the pandemic. Germany reported that it had provided crisis funding to compensate for lost revenues from nature tourism to community conservancies in Kenya and Namibia. Only six Member States reported that they had implemented corruption prevention measures in response to the pandemic. In relation to other measures introduced in response to the pandemic, Germany reported the establishment of the International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade, and in Peru, research regarding bushmeat consumption in urban settings was under way in response to health concerns generated by the pandemic.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 73/343 by United Nations entities

43. In its resolution 73/343, the General Assembly called upon United Nations entities, within their respective mandates, to continue to support efforts by Member States to fight illicit trafficking in wildlife. In response, efforts are currently being undertaken by several United Nations entities, including UNODC, UNDP, UNEP and the secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. This section of the report outlines the work of these entities since the adoption of resolution 73/343.

44. The secretariat of the Convention reported that it had continued to support Member States in tackling trafficking in wildlife through, among others, capacity-building, legal advice, compliance and enforcement assistance, and the provision of technical and other support to wildlife law enforcement efforts worldwide. The eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention adopted several decisions and resolutions on enforcement and compliance matters in order to address and respond to wildlife crime. The secretariat worked to implement these decisions and resolutions both independently as well as in cooperation with relevant parties and partners. The secretariat supported a broad range of activities, with a specific focus on key issues and species, including commissioning UNODC to carry out the 2019 West and Central Africa Wildlife Crime Threat Assessment; carrying out elephant conservation work; implementing the national ivory action plan process; and supporting parties in implementing the sustainable management of endangered tree species. The secretariat also provided legislative assistance through the National Legislation Project, established a compliance assistance programme and developed a tracking and management system for the Review of Significant Trade procedure.

45. UNDP continued to support Member States in developing and implementing national and regional projects to combat illicit trafficking in wildlife. These efforts included the provision of support to more than 20 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America under the Global Wildlife Programme of the Global Environment Facility. Coordination support provided by UNDP facilitated knowledge exchange and replication of best practices between Member States. UNDP supported Member States in building political will and commitments through a range of forums, including by endorsing the Leaders' Pledge for Nature signed by 70 States at the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, and raised awareness through engagement in the annual World Wildlife Day.

46. UNEP continued to support Member States in tackling the illegal wildlife trade through the provision of policy support at the national, regional and global levels. For example, UNEP produced high-level scientific assessments on the impact of illegal trade and trafficking in wildlife, with the aim of mobilizing support and political will for international cooperation. These assessments were published in *Wild Life, Wild Livelihoods* and "Evaluating the relationships between the legal and illegal international wildlife trades". The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre continued to support the hosting, maintenance and analysis of the Trade Database of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. UNEP supported Governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America in

strengthening their national legal frameworks and enhancing their enforcement capacity. UNEP also reinforced international efforts to develop and implement demand reduction strategies for threatened wildlife.

47. UNODC supported more than 40 Member States across Africa, Asia and Latin America in strengthening national responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife. UNODC trained over 2,000 criminal justice practitioners and supported more than 100 investigations into wildlife offences. UNODC also conducted training courses and advisory sessions for law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges; built capacity for conducting parallel financial investigations through the provision of mentorship support; developed an innovative guide to applying forensic accounting techniques to forest crime cases; built corruption risk management capacity in wildlife, forest and fisheries management and enforcement authorities; built capacity for wildlife forensic analysis; provided normative guidance and supported the development of new legislation on wildlife, forest and fisheries crime; compiled legislation, case law and national strategies related to wildlife crime in an online knowledge management portal known as Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC); conducted awareness-raising and capacity-building to combat crimes in the fisheries sector; co-facilitated a successful regional customs operation (Operation Mekong Dragon II); and supported international cooperation among law enforcement agencies. In addition, UNODC strengthened the capacities of investigators in crime scene management, special investigative techniques and wildlife forensics and published the *Wildlife Crime Scene Guide for First Responders* in collaboration with the African Wildlife Forensics Network. A series of rapid reference guides for investigators and prosecutors of wildlife crime were produced and tertiary education modules on wildlife crime were developed under the Education for Justice initiative.

48. The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime continued to implement a range of targeted activities through its strategic programme to build law enforcement capacity and improve geographical and cross-sectoral cooperation to combat wildlife crime. Key activities included a series of environmental crime and anti-money laundering risk assessments; the deployment of specialist support teams to assist national authorities in response to large-scale ivory and pangolin scale seizures; various regional investigative and analytical case management meetings; and the provision of support to the “Thunder” series of global coordinated law enforcement operations targeting illegal trade in wildlife and timber species. The Consortium built the capacity of front-line wildlife crime investigators for responding to wildlife crime as serious organized crime and enhanced their knowledge of advanced investigation techniques. In order to strengthen cooperation at the regional level, the Consortium convened the Third Global Meeting of Wildlife Enforcement Networks, finalized the “Guidelines for wildlife enforcement networks” and supported the reinvigoration of the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network and the South America Wildlife Enforcement Network. The Consortium also enhanced efforts to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet by producing guidelines and delivering training. The work of the Consortium to implement the *Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit* and Indicator Framework in requesting Member States is ongoing.

49. In its resolution [73/343](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to further improve the coordination of activities undertaken by United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes. United Nations entities reported working with relevant stakeholders to ensure a holistic and comprehensive approach to tackling wildlife trafficking, including by establishing working groups and task forces. For example, relevant United Nations entities continued to collaborate through the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products. The Task Force raised public awareness through the Wild for Life campaign, aimed at fostering an understanding of the social, economic and environmental impact of illegal trade and the legal frameworks that protect species listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. UNEP

supported the One Health High-Level Expert Panel in strengthening environmental dimensions with the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organization for Animal Health. United Nations entities strengthened engagement with the private sector, including through the United for Wildlife Task Forces and The Lion's Share initiative. United Nations entities also coordinated on species-specific initiatives including the virtual Big Cat Conservation Dialogue and Jaguar 2030 Dialogue. Other examples of successful cooperation included the work of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime and partnerships under the Global Environment Facility.

50. Also in its resolution [73/343](#), the General Assembly requested UNODC, within its mandate and resources, in line with Economic and Social Council resolution [2013/40](#) and in close cooperation and collaboration with Member States, to continue to collect information on patterns and flows of trafficking in wildlife and to report thereon biennially. Accordingly, UNODC issued the second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report* in 2020. Research is currently under way in relation to the third iteration of the *Report*.

51. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the provision by United Nations entities of technical assistance to Member States to help them tackle illicit trafficking in wildlife. Entities adapted by delivering support in a virtual format wherever possible. Online resources and knowledge products were developed. New and innovative projects were designed to respond to COVID-19 and the changing needs of Member States. For example, UNODC developed guidance on COVID-19 and wildlife crime, including on the potential risks of zoonotic pathogens associated with wildlife seizures and the risks posed to front-line officers; mentored wildlife crime investigators via secure virtual platforms; supported Member States in digitalizing criminal justice systems to allow virtual court proceedings; procured equipment to support wildlife authorities in managing poaching surges; and provided personal protective equipment to front-line enforcement officers. UNDP supported Member States in assessing the impact of COVID-19 and provided rapid-response grants through The Lion's Share initiative to support communities dependent on wildlife-based tourism. The secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and its related committees and working groups advanced their workplans electronically, holding virtual meetings and carrying out intersessional decision-making procedures under the Convention. UNEP jointly produced a scientific assessment with the International Livestock Research Institute, entitled *Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic Diseases and How to Break the Chain of Transmission*. The report included science and policy recommendations tied to the wildlife trade. The UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, UNEP and partners also conducted a study on the relationship between the legal and illegal trade in wildlife in order to inform trade regulations. The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime provided virtual coordination for law enforcement operations; organized webinars and awareness-raising events; and delivered online training and mentorship. United Nations entities collaborated on the design of new joint initiatives. For example, the Safety across Asia For the global Environment (SAFE) initiative was designed by UNODC and will be implemented in partnership with FAO, UNEP and other stakeholders. Under the initiative, a science-based assessment framework will be developed to identify high-risk facilities handling wildlife in South-East Asia that pose risks to human health; Member States will be supported in making interventions to reduce such risks.

IV. Proposals for possible future action

52. Following the request by the General Assembly in its resolution [73/343](#), the following proposals for possible future action are based on the second edition of the *World Wildlife Crime Report* as well as on insights gained through the review of Member State responses to the questionnaire on the implementation of General Assembly resolution [73/343](#).

53. Commitments have been made by Member States at a variety of high-level events and in various agreements to address wildlife trafficking and associated crimes. Given the gravity of the situation, Member States should take measures to fulfil these commitments, particularly those that have not yet done so.

54. Member State responses highlight the need to deliver tailored national assistance. There is no “one size fits all” approach and assistance must be evidence-based and country-specific.

55. Efforts to address gaps in national legislation can help reduce opportunities for wildlife crime to persist. Member States should take measures within their domestic legal frameworks, including: making trafficking in wildlife involving organized criminal groups a serious crime; ensuring offences related to wildlife trafficking are treated as predicate offences for the purposes of domestic money-laundering offences; and reviewing and amending national legislation to ensure the integration of the relevant conventions (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, United Nations Convention against Corruption, Organized Crime Convention) into domestic law.

56. Most responding States do not regularly investigate financial crimes linked to wildlife trafficking as part of wildlife crime investigations; the investigation of such financial crimes should be integrated into standard procedures.

57. It is vital to address corruption in order to prevent wildlife crime. Few Member States reported taking measures to prohibit, prevent and counter corruption linked to wildlife trafficking. Corruption prevention and risk mitigation work must be strengthened and prioritized by Member States.

58. Significant opportunities continue to exist for criminals to mask the trade in illegal wildlife products and to launder the proceeds of illegally sourced wildlife through legal supply chains. Further measures to ensure supply chain integrity are required.

59. Capacities within the criminal justice system, from crime scene to court, must be strengthened. Seizures of illegally traded wildlife and wildlife products must be followed by effective investigations using specialized investigative techniques, where necessary. The application of forensic science is critical not only to identify species being trafficked, but also to provide evidence to strengthen investigations and prosecutions.

60. The increased use of online platforms and technologies that facilitate trafficking in wildlife products is concerning. Law enforcement agencies need the capacity to investigate online sales of illegal wildlife and wildlife products, infiltrate existing online markets, collect relevant evidence, including by using digital forensics, and develop enforcement countermeasures.

61. Prosecutorial support and engagement are essential; prosecutors require support to work closely with investigators in order to identify elements of proof at the outset of investigations and collect the necessary evidence to build strong cases.

62. While some Member States reported investing in new research tools and data analysis, there remains a dearth of research and data on wildlife crime in many countries, including with regard to the gender dynamics of the illegal wildlife trade. Further efforts are required by Member States to address this.

63. The framework in which investigations and prosecutions take place is also critical to success. In order to address a commonly noted lack of coordination at the national level, there is an urgent need for an interdisciplinary approach that brings together law enforcement, wildlife management authorities and other relevant authorities such as financial intelligence units, public health and safety, and administrative and local authorities.

64. In addition to better coordination at the national level, there is a need for improved international cooperation. The Organized Crime Convention can be used as

the legal basis for international cooperation efforts, notably in terms of mutual legal assistance, extradition, joint investigations and the use of specialized investigative techniques. Member States highlighted that many of these tools were seldom used in addressing wildlife crime.

65. Responses to illicit trafficking in wildlife must be integrated into broader national and international agendas, including those on biodiversity, climate change and health. Ultimately, a balanced approach is required; enforcement responses must be complemented by awareness-raising measures, reduced demand, sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities and the active involvement of local communities in safeguarding biodiversity.

66. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that wildlife crime is a threat not only to the environment and biodiversity, but also to human health, economic development and security. The “One Health” approach needs to be at the centre of any informed policy involving the relationship between humans and wildlife species.

67. United Nations entities should, within their respective mandates, continue to support efforts by Member States to address illicit trafficking in wildlife through, inter alia, the provision of increased assistance in relation to law enforcement efforts, legislative reforms and the development of sustainable and alternative livelihoods for affected communities.
