

'END WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING'

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EU ACTION PLAN ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE



April 2015
By the Born Free Foundation





The Rt Hon William Hague MP
British First Secretary of State and Leader of the House of Commons

Many of the world's most iconic species face unprecedented threats as a direct result of human activities. The illegal wildlife trade causes the death of tens of thousands of elephants each year and over 1,200 South African rhino lost their lives to poaching and trafficking in 2014 alone. Along with tigers, sharks, pangolins, lions and other species, they are the targets of a global criminal industry, ranked alongside drugs, arms and people trafficking. This illegal trade has been linked to high-level corruption, insecurity and instability. It damages efforts to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development, and provides resources to militias determined to undermine the rule of law. Concerted global action is crucial and the European Union has a critical role to play.



Dr Patrick Omondi
Deputy Director, Kenya Wildlife Service

Kenya has every reason to be proud of its conservation and wildlife law enforcement credentials, but we cannot save Africa's wildlife from the ravages of illegal trade alone. The European Union has a huge part to play, as an important source, transit point and destination for many wildlife products of African origin. Coordinated EU action is vital if illegal trade routes and markets are to be shut down. The EU also has a great deal to offer Kenya and other source, transit and consumer countries for trafficked wildlife, through the provision of resources and expertise, and as a facilitator for collaboration between all countries concerned. While Kenya continues to take action to protect its iconic wild animals, we look to the European Union as a vital partner.



Catherine Bearder MEP
Chair of MEPs for Wildlife

Illegal wildlife trade not only constitutes a major threat to the conservation of ecosystems and its wildlife, but it also poses a major security and economic threat to countries worldwide. With an estimated annual turnover of at least €17.92 billion (\$19 billion), the fact is that it is now the fourth largest illegal activity in the world, after drug trafficking, counterfeiting and human trafficking. It is clear that coordinated European and global action is required to tackle this crisis now by all of us. The development of a meaningful EU Wildlife Crime action plan has wide political support across the Parliament, and I and my fellow MEPs urge the Commission to come forward with such a plan without delay.

"Around the world the illegal wildlife trade is responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of animals a year, pushing some of our most loved species to the brink of extinction. Our children should not live in a world without elephants, tigers, pangolins and rhinos. Enough is enough. We are asking you to join our side. It's time to choose between critically endangered species and the criminals who kill them for money. Whose side are you on?"

HRH The Duke of Cambridge, President of United for Wildlife



INTRODUCTION

Will Travers OBE

President, Born Free Foundation

The European Union is already a global leader on the issue of international illegal trade in wildlife. It has driven much-needed legal reforms and practical implementation efforts around the world. However, there is more that can and must be done.

The European Parliament's call for an EU Action Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade, through its Resolution on Wildlife Crime (2013/2747(RSP)), gives the European Commission a unique opportunity to ensure that the EU remains at the forefront of this critical global issue. Time and again the EU has stood up to defend the causes of environmental protection and animal welfare, as well as law enforcement, good governance and the rights of vulnerable communities. European citizens are rightly proud of this tradition, and now is the time for the European Commission to make them proud again.

The global illegal wildlife trade – be it live animals for the pet trade or public display, carcasses traded as 'trophies', or specific body parts and products made from them – is driving criminal activity, corruption, environmental destruction, animal suffering and risks to human safety and national security.

The facts surrounding wildlife trade today are shocking:

- The estimated global value of illegal trade in wildlife products is over €17 billion a year;
- Around 2,500 seizures of illegally traded wildlife products are made in the EU every year;
- 30,000 or more African elephants are being killed annually, from a known wild population estimated at 434,000;
- The number of rhinos poached in South Africa has risen year on year from 13 in 2007 to 1,215 in 2014;
- Collection of wild animals for the pet trade is implicated in declines of many species such as the North American spotted turtle and the African grey parrot;
- A recent study found that pet reptiles with a natural life expectancy of 8-120 years had a 75% annual mortality rate in UK homes;
- The European Invasive Alien Species Gateway lists 80 species known to have become established in Europe through accidental or deliberate release of non-native wild animals traded as pets;
- A 2010 study estimated that five tonnes of bushmeat was being smuggled through Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris, each week.

An EU Action Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade should focus on what the EU can do, both to tighten up its internal mechanisms to ensure a consistent deterrent approach to wildlife crime across and within its borders, and to help build capacity in developing countries, which include the major sources and destinations for many species of wild animals in illegal trade. International wildlife charity the Born Free Foundation has produced a detailed resource – summarised later in this report – which gives practical recommendations for reviewing and enforcing the application of national, European and international laws, supporting non-EU countries and intergovernmental agencies, overseeing the trade in live animals, and mainstreaming wildlife trade in governmental and financial decision-making.

Leadership means action, and the European Union is poised to make meaningful decisions and further commitments that could help to secure the long-term viability of a variety of vulnerable, threatened and endangered species. The time to act is now – there is, quite literally, no time to waste.



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"The support of individual MEPS will be critical in ensuring that the EU takes a strong and effective stand against this global criminal activity."



HIGH-VALUE WILDLIFE PRODUCTS

Some wild animal products, like ivory, rhino horn and tiger skins, are worth a huge amount in consumer markets, despite commercial trade in them being banned by international agreement and outlawed in numerous national jurisdictions. Trafficking of these lucrative products attracts organised criminal networks and threatens many wild species with extinction. The EU should redouble its efforts to prevent the destructive trade in wildlife within or across its borders, support international efforts and strongly encourage other governments to do the same. It should also ensure that investments, aid, and other financial instruments do not inadvertently undermine such efforts.

The problem

The global value of illegal trade in wildlife products is estimated at more than €17 billion a year. This includes trafficking in high-value products such as ivory and rhino horn, the inflated price of which drives an unsustainable level of poaching that can devastate wild populations. More than 100,000 African elephants were poached between 2010 and 2012, from a known wild population estimated at 434,000, and record breaking seizures of ivory shipments were recorded from 2011-2013. In South Africa – stronghold of the African rhino – the number of rhinos poached has risen year on year from 13 in 2007 to 1,215 in 2014; powdered rhino horn is now worth more by weight than gold, and has led to fraudulently authorised rhino trophy hunts, and antique taxidermy specimens being stolen from European museums. Similar stories can be told about products ranging from lion bones and tiger skins to pangolin scales and sea turtle shells. As well as threatening vulnerable species and having devastating impacts on the welfare of individual animals, poaching to supply this trade deprives States and communities of their natural capital and cultural heritage, with serious economic and social consequences.

The situation

To date, 180 countries have ratified the United Nation's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) which regulates, restricts or prohibits international trade in many wildlife species where it is thought to have an impact on wild populations. Parties to CITES are committed to implement the Convention through national legislation. However, international smuggling takes place on a huge scale, which is often beyond the capacity or political will of national authorities to quash. Indeed they are sometimes complicit in

the activity. The scale and value of the trade attracts organised criminal networks and the need for it to be treated as a serious crime in this regard has been acknowledged by the United Nations, the European Union and the Declaration of the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade to which the EU is a signatory. Wildlife crime is organised crime.

The EU's role

The EU is implicated in the illegal wildlife trade as a source, destination and transit point for many high-value products, with around 2,500 seizures made each year. Regulations are not always uniform, so while some Member States prohibit all trade in ivory, for example, some still permit trade in older pieces – in the last three months of 2014 more than 100 tusks were sold in France, mostly to Chinese buyers, prompting a tightening of French domestic measures, and a call for harmonisation of restrictions across the EU by ministers from Germany, France, UK, Netherlands, Sweden and Austria. The EU is also a major destination for trophies from 'game' hunting, some of which are subsequently laundered into illegal trade. Internationally the EU has a global influence, not only through its membership of and support for international institutions addressing the illegal wildlife trade and organised crime, but also through the outcomes of financial investment, development aid, trade agreements and other activities. Guidance is needed to ensure these activities are conducted responsibly and do not unintentionally contribute to the problem.

The EU is a source, destination and transit point for the illegal wildlife trade, with around 2,500 seizures each year.



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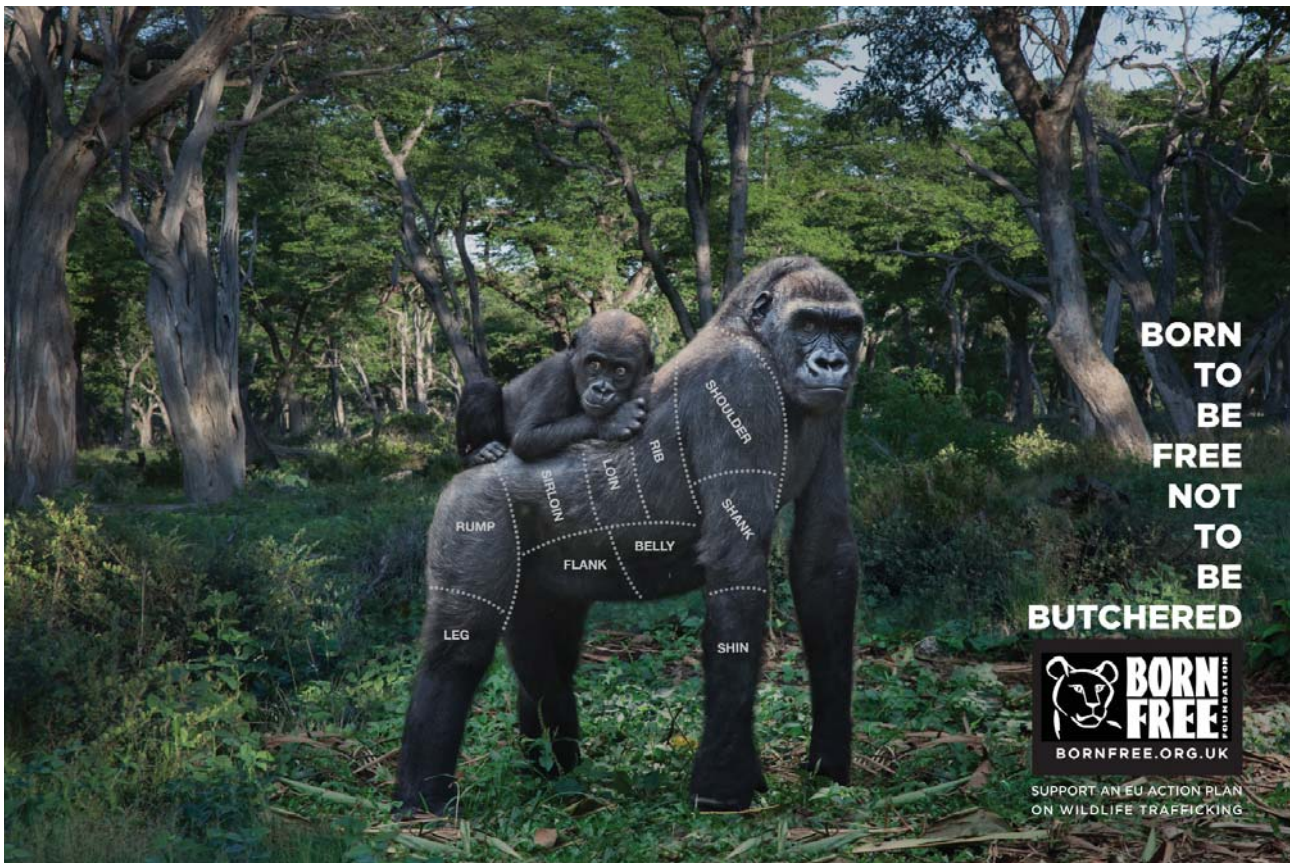


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30,000 or more African elephants are being killed annually, from a known wild population estimated at 434,000.



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BUSHMEAT

Across the world, wild animals have been sought by subsistence hunters for thousands of years, providing an economic and nutritional safety net for many human communities. However, in more recent times, the hunting of many mammal species has become increasingly unsustainable. As human populations have grown and areas of natural habitat have been destroyed or degraded, large-scale hunting of wildlife for food has increasingly become a driver of local and global extinctions. This is in part due to the introduction of more efficient methods of hunting using firearms, but also because of increased commercial demand for some kinds of 'bushmeat'.

The problem

In recent decades, the trade in bushmeat has grown as a result of natural resource extraction and associated infrastructural development. Roads link previously remote areas to urban centres and increase the ease with which wild animals can be hunted and transported, and hence the profitability of the trade. The movement of people from rural areas into cities, has created large and concentrated markets for 'traditional' meat from wild animals. Bushmeat may also form a significant part of the diets of workers, increasing the pressure on wildlife populations where large projects such as infrastructure developments and legal or illegal logging or mining operations are located in rural areas. The lack of alternative sources of protein in many countries perpetuates the human population's dependence on wild animals. This is a major conservation concern in parts of Africa, South Asia and South America, and in some regions constitutes a conservation crisis. The handling and eating of wild animals can also present a serious human health risk.

The situation

Whilst some bushmeat hunting may be regulated, much is unregulated or illegal, and often targets protected species or protected areas. Enforcement efforts are frequently restricted by limited resources and cannot adequately address poaching in remote areas. In many cases there is also a lack of political will to address these issues, and weak governance can preclude viable and sustainable wildlife management efforts. Studies aimed at securing a better understanding of the drivers of the trade and the effectiveness of efforts to combat it are still being conducted, and targeted research is important in understanding the nature of the trade as it evolves. Bushmeat

is also traded to diaspora communities around the world including in the European Union. In some instances it also seen as an 'exotic delicacy'. A 2010 study estimated that five tonnes of bushmeat was being smuggled through Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris, each week, predominantly from West and Central Africa. International smuggling typically takes place at low volumes in hand luggage, but can be detected by sniffer dogs or specialised scanning machines.

The EU's role

EU-supported actions across the developing world have both positive and negative impacts on the issue. With the right focus, the provision of assistance to national authorities, local and international government agencies and non governmental organisations (NGOs) – whether financial, logistical or in terms of training and capacity building – can greatly enhance efforts to control bushmeat hunting and trading at source. Support for prioritised research activities can also be beneficial. However, other forms of intervention, including development aid and financial investment, can severely exacerbate the problem if necessary checks are not fully integrated into project development to avoid inadvertently creating increased demand for bushmeat or opportunities for trafficking. Impact assessments, due diligence procedures and other measures should be designed to ensure such projects do not undermine wildlife conservation efforts. The EU is also a significant destination for the international illegal bushmeat trade and, whilst some of this is intercepted, efforts should be enhanced to clamp down on these illegal imports.

The movement of people from rural areas into cities has created a concentrated commercial market for 'traditional' wild animal meat.

Large-scale commercial hunting of wildlife for food has increasingly become a driver of local and global extinctions.



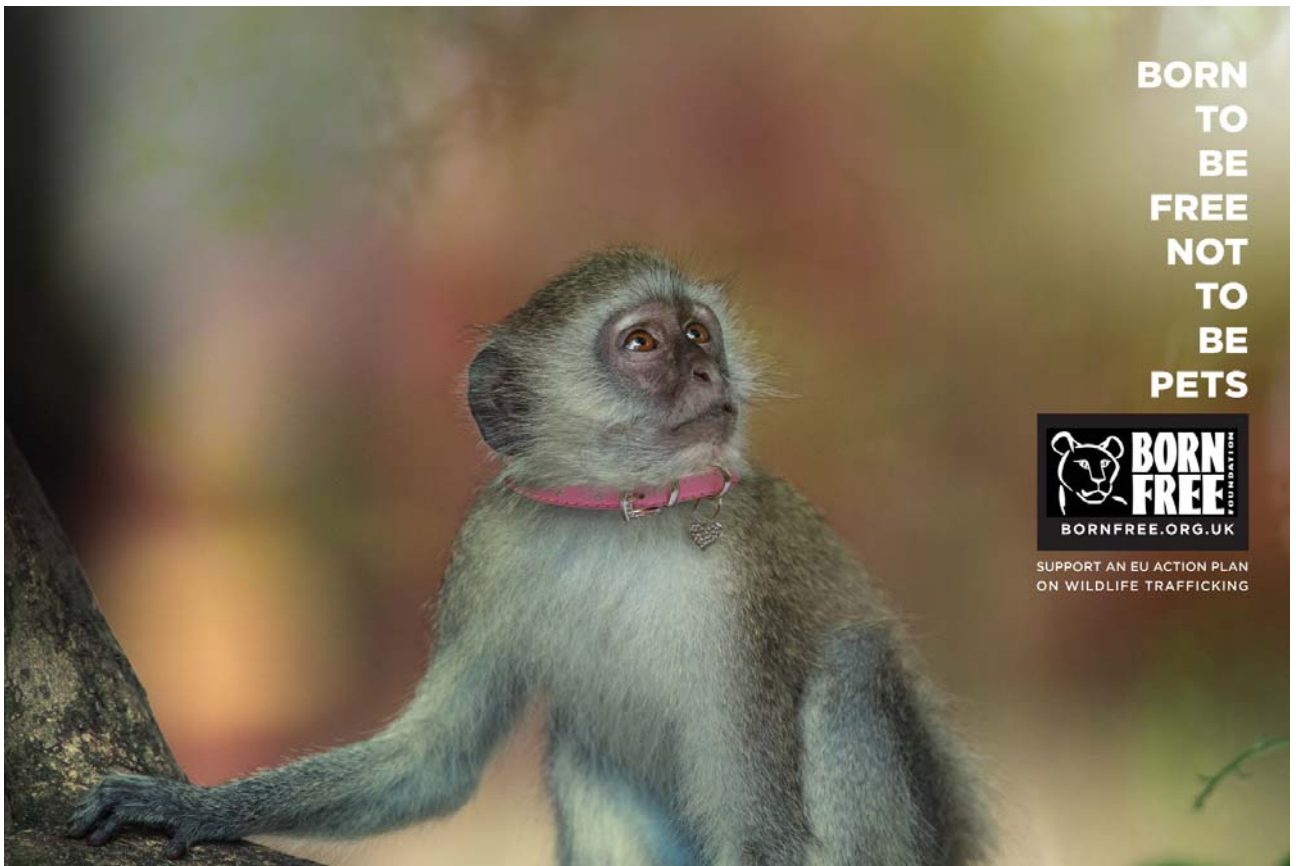
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LIVE ANIMAL TRADE

Many millions of wild animals, including fish, reptiles, amphibians and mammals, are imported live into the EU and traded within it as pets. This trade can severely compromise the welfare of the animals, as well as threatening human health and safety, the environment, and the conservation of the species concerned. A significant proportion of this trade is illegal, while current EU legislation is often disjointed and ambiguous, and urgently needs to be updated and harmonised. There should be a sound, uniform policy within the EU that tightly regulates the trade in exotic animals as pets, whether wild-caught or captive bred.

The problem

Non-domesticated animals are widely traded as pets worldwide, both legally and illegally. This trade can severely compromise the welfare of the animals involved, from the point of birth or capture, through transport and holding, to the conditions in which the animals are kept at their final destination, or their treatment following confiscation. Where individual animals are taken from the wild, this can present a threat to the survival of wild populations, as in the case of the spur-thighed tortoise, the North American spotted turtle, the African grey parrot and the critically endangered African turquoise dwarf gecko (165 of which were seized at Heathrow Airport, UK in March 2015). Some wild pets can present a risk to the health and safety of their owners and others through spread of disease or risk of injury. Live animals that are accidentally or deliberately released into the wild may introduce pathogens or establish populations that threaten native species and habitats – the European Invasive Alien Species Gateway lists 80 species known to have become established in Europe as a direct consequence of the trade in wild pets.

The situation

The global trade in wild pets is a multi-billion euro industry, with a significant proportion being illegal and hence unregulated. In the case of legal trade, regulations and restrictions are frequently lacking and only consider a limited range of factors – mainly human safety and well-publicised risks to source populations – without suitable mechanisms for fully evaluating the impacts of live trade on relevant species. The welfare of the animals concerned is often largely overlooked despite strong evidence that well-being may be severely compromised

by capture, holding, transfer and subsequent captivity – one study found that pet reptiles, with a natural life expectancy of anything up to 120 years, suffer an annual mortality rate of 75% in UK homes, suggesting that the vast majority of animals die early. Enforcement issues such as the correct identification of species, and the care and repatriation of confiscated live animals, are often poorly addressed. Enforcement authorities often struggle to cope with the number and variety of live animals coming across their borders.

The EU's role

The EU is a large and growing market for wild pets – according to industry estimates, the total value of the European trade in reptiles alone exceeds 1 billion euros. The Lisbon Treaty requires that the European Union and Member States pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, and details are set out in the EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals. The need to harmonise legislation was recognised by the International Conference on the Movement of Exotic Animals in 2012. EU import restrictions vary substantially and rarely consider ecological or welfare impacts. EU and international frameworks already exist to address the key issues of animal welfare, human health and safety, and environmental protection (in source and destination areas). However, many principles and guidelines are not mandated and are therefore overlooked, whilst ambiguities or impracticalities in existing regulations allow many unacceptable practices to persist due to technical loopholes. Hence there is huge scope for improving the application of established principles and the effectiveness of enforcement measures.

The EU is a large and growing market for wild pets – according to industry estimates, the total value of the European trade in reptiles alone exceeds 1 billion euros.



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For every one wild animal captured and sold as a pet up to 50 are killed or die in transit. 70% of these animals may die in the first six weeks.



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DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE EU ACTION PLAN

Urgent action is needed to curb international trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products, and the EU has an opportunity to play a leading role in these efforts. In recognising the huge scale of the trade at a global level, its impact on threatened species and habitats worldwide, its association with organised crime and its potential impact on human and animal health and welfare, the EU has already done a great deal, but further action is urgently needed.

The EU's responsibility is already acknowledged through internal instruments such as *Council Regulation 338/97*, *Resolution 2013/2747(RSP)* and the *Communication on the EU Approach against Wildlife Trafficking (COM(2014) 64)*. It is also pertinent to many international commitments including: 'The Future We Want' adopted at Rio+20; the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora; the UN Conventions against Transnational Organised Crime and against Corruption; the Convention on Migratory Species; the London Summit Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade (2014); and the Statement from the Kasane Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade (2015).

The EU's key global role is evident from its involvement as a source, transit hub and major market for illegally traded wildlife products, and its involvement in many international activities that can impact these issues. The EU has already committed to tackling this issue, through declarations and action plans developed by EU Member States. The situation was summed up by the EU Commissioner of Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella in 2014, when he said: *"I would like to see the EU at the forefront of tackling wildlife trafficking, both domestically and internationally"*.

The European Parliament Resolution on Wildlife Crime (2013/2747(RSP)) calls on the European Commission to help curb wildlife trafficking through the development of an EU Action Plan on illegal wildlife trade. The Born Free Foundation fully supports the development of such an EU Action Plan, and seeks to ensure that it includes meaningful domestic, European and international measures, through engagement at all levels of policy and governance. In particular, an EU Action Plan should complement existing declarations and commitments with a focus on practical implementation and enforcement, and should contain clear and measurable objectives, responsibilities, deliverables and timetables.

The Born Free Foundation has prepared a detailed resource document to provide technical recommendations on the development of this EU Action Plan. The key points are summarised opposite.

"I would like to see the EU at the forefront of tackling wildlife trafficking"

**Karmenu Vella,
EU Commissioner of Environment,
Maritime Affairs and Fisheries**



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EU ACTION PLAN

Action within the EU

- The Action Plan should promote engagement across EU institutions, to ensure the illegal wildlife trade is treated as a serious and organised crime across the Commission and EU Member States, and that it is considered in due diligence procedures for financial investment.
- Regulations should be reviewed and enhanced to ensure the EU tackles wildlife trafficking effectively. In particular, offences connected to illegal wildlife trade should be treated as 'predicate' offences, as defined in the *UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime*, to enable the detection of associated money laundering activities and the confiscation of proceeds of wildlife trafficking. Where necessary stricter measures should be adopted over and above those required by international commitments, including prohibition of trade in key products such as ivory and rhino horn.
- Enforcement should be enhanced by providing EU Member States with the appropriate capacity and guidance to ensure consistent application of regulations and judicial processes across the European Union. To this end, we advocate the establishment of a specialist Wildlife Crime Unit within the European Union's law enforcement agency (Europol).
- Measures should be included to promote compliance with regulations and recommendations concerning the welfare of live animals in trade, restrict or prohibit the import of live animals whose survival might be compromised, and review trade in products derived from live animals the collection or extraction of which causes suffering. EU Member States should be required to possess appropriate mechanisms for identifying experts and facilities to protect the welfare of live animals in trade.
- Resources should be allocated to monitoring and research designed to enhance understanding of critical issues, measure the effectiveness of enforcement efforts, and enable appropriate modifications to be made to policy and enforcement measures.

International action

- The EU and its Member States should make compliance with international commitments on wildlife trade, and action on the corruption that facilitates it, a prerequisite for trade agreements with non-EU countries. The provision of EU development aid should be linked to measures aimed at combatting wildlife trafficking.
- The EU Action Plan should include provisions to ensure the EU's continued and enhanced support for international agreements and intergovernmental agencies engaged in combatting illegal wildlife trade, through financing, training and capacity-building.
- The EU Action Plan should promote international efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, by supporting developing countries' enforcement and demand reduction efforts through the deployment of EU expertise and resources.
- The EU Action Plan should provide mechanisms for identifying focal points within EU and Member State diplomatic missions, in order to facilitate engagement with non-EU countries aimed at combatting illegal wildlife trade.



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WHAT MEPs CAN DO:

1. Call upon the European Commission to establish an EU Action Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade, and to ensure EU Member States have the necessary resources and expertise to fully implement it;
2. Call upon EU Member State governments to support an EU Action Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade, and develop complementary National Action Plans;
3. Engage with non-EU countries through the European Parliament's delegations to emphasise the need for robust measures to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking;
4. Support 'MEPs for Wildlife', the European Parliamentary Interest Group on Wildlife Crime, and sign up to the Group's pledge, in order to demonstrate your commitment to curb wildlife trafficking in Europe and beyond.

Further information:

Recommendations for an EU Action Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade

Available from the Born Free Foundation

Declaration of the London Summit on Illegal Wildlife Trade (2014)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281289/london-wildlife-conference-declaration-140213.pdf

Statement from the Kasane Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (2015)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-wildlife-trade-kasane-statement>

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

www.cites.org

United Nations Resolution on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Responses to Illicit Trafficking in Protected Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (2013)

https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/Crime_Resolutions/2010-2019/2013/ECOSOC/Resolution_2013-40.pdf

European Parliament Motion for a Resolution on Wildlife Crime (2014)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+MOTION+B7-2014-0013+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the EU Approach against Wildlife Trafficking (2014)

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/communication_en.pdf

European Commission Summary – Key Outcomes of the Expert Conference on the EU Approach against Wildlife Trafficking (2014)

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/summary_outcome.pdf

European Invasive Alien Species Gateway

<http://www.europe-alien.org/>

ENDCAP

<http://endcap.eu/>

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