UNEP: Wildlife crime

Every day the news bombards us with gruesome tales of crimes being committed across the oceans and in our backyards. Homicide, domestic abuse, rape, gun violence and the like. However, for some reason our national media seems to ignore the gruesome crimes being committed everyday in our own home - our planet. How many times a day do we hear about illegal mining, pollution crimes, illegal fishing, illegal logging, or most importantly for our discussions wildlife crimes.

According to a UNODC official statement these are listed among the most profitable crimes that exist - outearning financial misconduct and robbery - funding complete industries in its corruptness.

However, as we currently stand the situation is a difficult one to solve as lack of data, knowledge and awareness, lack and limited use of legislation, lack of institutional will and governance, lack of capacity in the enforcement chain, lack of national and international cooperation and information sharing among authorities, and lack of engagement with private actors and local communities create a situation which is both dire and seemingly impossible to affect a change.

According to the WWF “In more than 50 years of conservation, we have never seen wildlife crime on such a scale. Wildlife crime is now the most urgent threat to three of the world's best-loved species—elephants, rhinos and tigers.” clearly these crimes are a direct threat to maintaining the biodiversity of our planet. We stand at a point in history, where as a result of poachers and the demand for illegal animal products, it is possible that we will live to see the end of the lifespans of many species such as Pandas, tigers, elephants, gorillas, sea turtles, polar bears, rhinos, and whales. According to the WWE “Controlled by dangerous crime syndicates, wildlife is trafficked much like drugs or weapons. Wildlife criminals often operate with impunity, making the trade a low-risk/high-profit business. Today, it is the fifth most profitable illicit trade in the world, estimated at up to $10 billion annually.”

Some things to consider:

- Does the dwindling of the animal populations listed seem to be a worse outcome than what might occur if we cracked down on enforcing the laws preventing illegal trade and poaching?
- How could we regulate the industry in a way that wouldn’t cause it to shift focuses to other species?

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1 Cites.org
2 UNODC - Wildlife crime worth USD 8-10 billion annually, ranking it alongside human trafficking, arms and drug dealing in terms of profits.
3 Wiley Online Library - Wildlife Crime promoted by weak governance
4 BBC Earth - What is the point of saving endangered species
Should every country have jurisdiction over its own environmental laws or should environmental rights be considered inalienable such as human rights.

Remember, our job here on UNEP is to encourage world leaders to collaborate to keep the earth as clean and pristine as we found it. We have the power to make or attempt to make binding agreements for international environmental policy. While these questions might help guide you in your thinking about this topic, there are plenty of other issues you may choose to consider so that you gain a nuanced perspective on the issue at hand. Remember that you are representing the views of your country. I urge you as delegates to get a thorough knowledge of your country’s respective environmental policies as well as their presence or lack thereof on the fight against pollution. As you begin researching your topics and writing your papers keep in mind that everything will be checked for plagiarism on turnitin.com; if you have any comments, questions, concerns, or want guidance on how to approach your preparation to feel free to reach out at avigayiladouth@gmail.com!

May the odds be ever in your favor,
Avigayil Adouth
UNEP Chair