

Cerritos Novice Conference 2020

# United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

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**Topic : Wildlife Trafficking**

**Director: Angelina Lee**

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October 10th, 2020

To Delegates of CHSMUN Novice 2020

Dear Delegates,  
Welcome to CHSMUN Novice 2020!

It is our highest honor and pleasure to welcome you all to our 2020 online novice conference here at Cerritos High School. On behalf of the Cerritos High School Model United Nations program, we are proud to host our very first virtual novice conference, where you will become more knowledgeable on international issues, participate in intellectually stimulating discussions, and create new and everlasting friendships.

The CHSMUN program continues to compete around the world as a nationally ranked MUN program. Our delegates utilize diplomacy in order to create complex solutions towards multilateral issues in the global community. Our head chairs are selected from only the best seniors of our program, undergoing a rigorous training process to ensure the highest quality of moderating and grading of debate. Furthermore, all the topic synopses have been reviewed and edited numerous times. We strongly believe that by providing each and every delegate with the necessary tools and understanding, he or she will have everything they need to thrive in all aspects of the committee. We thoroughly encourage each delegate to engage in all of the facets of their topic, in order to grow in their skills as a delegate and develop a greater knowledge of the world around them.

Although this wasn't what we expected, our advisors and staff have put in countless hours to ensure delegates have an amazing experience at the online conference. Our greatest hope is that from attending CHSMUN 2020, students are encouraged to continue on in Model United Nations and nevertheless, inspired to spark change in their surrounding communities. CHSMUN Novice 2020 will provide a quality experience for beginner delegates to develop their speaking and delegating skills.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact us! We look forward to seeing you at CHSMUN Novice 2020!

Sincerely,

Anjali Mani and Karishma Patel

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Secretary-Generals

## **A Note From The Director**

Delegates,

My name is Angelina Lee, and I am looking forward to being your director of the UN Environmental Programme committee at the Cerritos Fall Conference 2020. After being in MUN for the past six years, I've learned so many invaluable life lessons and skills from conferences. The best part of MUN for me has been meeting new people from all over the world and learning from them. I highly recommend that you treat every conference as a learning experience and continue to improve your research and public speaking skills. Aside from MUN, I am involved in Key Club, Science Olympiad, Journalism, Track and Field (throwing), and National Honors Society! I am also a huge fan of the Dodgers and the show Avatar: The Last Airbender. As your director, I hope that I can help support you all on your own MUN journey and create an enjoyable conference experience online. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to message me, and I would be more than happy to help!

Sincerely,

Angelina Lee

Director, UNEP

## **Committee Introduction**

At the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in June 1972, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) was established to address the rising urgency of environmental issues. Its main focus is to implement environmental protection measures through preventative and action-based initiatives. Ranging from climate change to environmental policies to hazardous waste, UNEP takes on a variety of environmental issues to advocate for better treatment of the environment. The UNEP facilitates research into renewable energy sources and development of climate change countermeasures, such as climate finance and REDD+ initiatives. In post-conflict areas, the UNEP analyzes the collateral damage on the surrounding environment and offers case-by-case resources to support future conservation efforts. Furthermore, the UNEP focuses on the environmental impact of hazardous material as well as energy consumption and production, seeking ways to mitigate these risks and promote sustainability. In doing so, the UNEP aims to identify environmental issues, encourage international collaboration, and foster lasting environmental reform.

# **Topic: Wildlife Trafficking**

## Background:

Wildlife trafficking is defined as illegal activities involving the taking and sale of live animals or wildlife products. Although not all wildlife trades are illegal, much of this industry targets endangered, protected species. These species are sought after to be sold as pets, meats, skins, and other products. The demand for these animals have encouraged a rise in poaching, threatening the already dwindling populations of these endangered species. Despite international efforts to ban the sale of goods from the illegal wildlife trade, over 7,000 species in 120 countries are considered to be at high risk due to this industry. However, the consequences of the illegal wildlife trade reach far beyond the potential extinction of countless species of plants and animals. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, illicit wildlife trafficking is considered to be the “second-biggest threat to the vital biodiversity of our planet” (Hou). By targeting specific species, the illicit wildlife trade disrupts countless environments and severely diminishes the populations of these species. Biodiversity is crucial to the protection and stability of ecosystems around the world as the destruction of these natural ecosystems will have adverse consequences on humans. For example, naturally-occurring medicines, weather patterns, and resources would be upset by the lack of biodiversity. Illegal fishing activities contribute to the overfishing of certain species, and the illegal harvesting of trees results in the destruction of habitats and accelerates climate change. The ripple effects from these losses in biodiversity are all tied back to the illicit wildlife trade. Not only does the illicit wildlife trade have environmental implications, it also threatens the governmental and financial stability of developing nations. With the illicit wildlife trade industry amounting to \$10 billion a year, the supply chain of these products are often left untouched due to corruption and the lack of enforcement. From fake logging and hunting permits to bribes towards park rangers and border control officials, this widespread corruption has allowed many criminals involved in the illegal wildlife trade to escape punishment for their actions. The magnitude of this corruption is exacerbated by the prevalence of organized crime, which has become increasingly connected to the lucrative wildlife trafficking industry. The combination of corruption and organized crime leaves a strain on the already limited funding and resources of these nations, leaving these vulnerable nations even more prone to instability. Some of the most affected species include pangolins, rhinoceros, and elephants. Known as the “most illegally traded mammal in the world”, pangolins have become widely hunted for their meat and scales (Hou). The popularity of pangolin meat and scales have largely been driven by their usage in traditional medicines and cultural delicacies in Asian countries. Despite the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora’s (CITES) international ban on the trade of pangolins, an estimated one million pangolins have been trafficked in the last 15 years (Hou). As for elephants, the illegal ivory trade has prompted higher levels of poaching to the point where elephant deaths are more likely to be caused by poaching rather than natural causes. Their ivory is mostly used for carving, decorative purposes, including jewelry, and can be considered as a token of luck or wealth. Although extensive bans have been implemented to hinder the illegal ivory trade, African elephant populations have decreased by “50% over the past 40 years” (“U.S. Efforts to Control”).

Rhinoceros are similarly facing extinction due to their extremely expensive horns. Their horns are believed to hold special medicinal properties in some Asian cultures, especially China and Vietnam. The rarity and superstitions surrounding rhino horns has driven all five rhino species near extinction, leaving rhinos to become one of the most endangered mammals.

## United Nations Involvement:

According to the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations (UN) aims to conserve biodiversity, prevent the destruction of natural ecosystems, and protect the populations of endangered species. In July 2015, the UN General Assembly implemented Resolution 69/314 titled “Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife.” This resolution delves into the legal, technological, and financial aspects of the issue at hand. It specifies the best course of action in the wildlife trafficking investigations, emphasizing the importance of looking into financial crimes linked to wildlife trafficking. In doing so, this resolution aims to uncover and eliminate the roots of the illicit wildlife trade: the hidden network of customers in the wildlife trafficking industry. The UN has established a multitude of frameworks and projects in response to the urgent issue of illicit wildlife trafficking. Its efforts include but are not limited to proper enforcement of public awareness projects, laws pertaining to illicit wildlife trafficking, and international collaboration dedicated to stopping the illegal trade of wildlife. In 2016, the UNEP created the Wild for Life campaign focusing on educating the public about the extent and consequences of illegal wildlife trafficking. Its social media outreach allowed for targeted, endangered species, such as pangolins and rhinos, to receive more protection. Following the widespread success of the Wild for Life campaign, the UNEP established an agreement with the China Green Foundation to further emphasize public awareness and action efforts in order to fight against the illicit wildlife trade. The China Green Foundation, an organization focusing on environmental conservation and restoration, will work to aid this fight by mobilizing awareness campaigns specifically in China. The UNEP has also directed its focus towards the legal and enforcement aspects in the illicit wildlife trade. In January 2019, the UNEP published a report called ‘Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Licit and Illicit Trade in Wildlife and Forest Products’ that serves as a resource for countries in the fight against the illicit wildlife trade. Not only does the UNEP provide hands-on guidelines for countries, the UNEP also administers ways to control the illicit trade of wildlife. One such example is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES oversees the international wildlife trade of more than 40,000 species of animals and plants to ensure that these populations are not at risk. CITES also combats the illegal wildlife trade by “prohibiting trade in specimens in violation of the Convention; penalizing illegal trade; and confiscating specimens illegally possessed” (“Three Ways”). Additionally, it facilitates the training and support for judges, communities, and law enforcement involved in countering the illegal wildlife trade around the world.

## Bloc Positions:

**Western:** Despite international ivory bans implemented by many countries, like the United States and United Kingdom, Western countries continue to serve as a significant market for illegally-trafficked wildlife goods. Considering how “only 10 to 15 percent of illicit wildlife products transiting through all of Europe are seized”, delegates should focus on intercepting trade networks through stronger border control, more regulations, and greater enforcement of such laws (Daea). Delegates should also look into ways to effectively sentence and punish perpetrators of these crimes, especially as many criminals receive little to no punishment for their actions.

**Latin America and Caribbean:** With the rise of organized crime in the illegal wildlife trade, countries in the Latin America and Caribbean regions have become a target due to their immensely biodiverse ecosystems. According to Peru’s National Forestry and Wildlife Service, over 90,000 specimens were confiscated from 2000 to 2018 in the country alone. Delegates should focus on reinforcing the enforcement and judicial sectors of these nations in order to properly prevent and punish criminal activities pertaining to wildlife trafficking. Efforts should also be directed towards the protection of many species in these regions, such as jaguars that are hunted for their teeth.

**African:** As many African countries serve as transit points for the illegal wildlife trade, stronger border control must be taken in order to disrupt the supply chains and trade routes. In particular, sub-Saharan Africa is a major hub where poachers and traffickers alike target protected species and transport them to other nations. Delegates should focus on the creating and sharing of technology, knowledge, and training required to properly catch and investigate perpetrators of wildlife trafficking. Solutions should also take into consideration the role of local communities in the fight against wildlife trafficking and the conservation of natural environments.

**Asian-Pacific:** With the Southeast Asia region considered to be a hotspot for illicit wildlife trade, the reasons for its major influence can be traced back to corruption as well as a lack of proper regulations and enforcement. The Golden Triangle, located on the borders between Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar, is considered to be the most notorious region for wildlife trafficking as it is the center of many of these activities. Delegates should focus on ways to reduce consumer demand through the usage of alternative products or wildlife trafficking awareness campaigns. Delegates should also identify solutions that emphasize collaboration and regulatory action in countering the illegal wildlife trade.

## Basic Solutions:

As the illegal wildlife trade continues to damage environments around the world, delegates must look into solutions that will break the various supply chains through stronger border control and nature protection measures. Border control in transit countries can be reinforced through comprehensive training of border officials, prosecutors, judges, and park rangers. For example, CITES works in conjunction with TRAFFIC to offer both virtual and in-person training courses to teach officers about how to combat the illegal wildlife trade in their respective roles. This type of training will be pertinent in ensuring that corruption and lack of

enforcement do not play a role in the illegal wildlife trade. Delegates should understand the importance of properly training officials and seek ways to expand these training programs in places where corruption and weak enforcement run rampant. In addition to training, delegates must also tackle the root problem of consumer demand for such products. The lucrative nature of the illegal wildlife trade incentivizes people to become poachers and sellers in order to meet the immense demand for illegal wildlife products, such as ivory and rare meats. Delegates should highlight possible alternatives to popular trafficked items and awareness campaigns that can be conducted to show the devastating impact of this industry. Noting that the illegal wildlife trade spans all over the world, delegates must realize that a greater emphasis on local, national, and international collaboration will be instrumental to combating this industry. By sharing knowledge about the illegal wildlife trade, officials can collaborate with one another to uncover hidden trade networks and provide substantial evidence in the prosecution of wildlife traffickers. For instance, South Africa's National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit was made specifically to encourage increased communication and information collection among governmental bodies pertaining to wildlife trafficking. The establishment of this unit contributed to the doubling of the arrest rates when it came to rhino crimes in South Africa due to more coordinated efforts and evidence. Similar database systems, such as the World WISE Database and Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS), can be shared among officers to better identify patterns in trade routes and investigate those involved in such crimes. Technology has a growing role in stopping the illegal wildlife trade whether it comes in the form of databases or animal monitoring systems or electronic license platforms. The implementation of these technological solutions can help to detect real-time illegal activities, prevent forged licenses, and provide evidence for wildlife trafficking investigations. One example is Panthera's Poacher Cam, which utilizes motion sensors to catch poachers and alert enforcement officers. This camera is easily portable, resistant to inclement weather, and has the ability to differentiate between humans and animals. The data is recorded from online platforms to local law enforcement where they receive the evidence of poachers and their whereabouts. Since its development in 2013, over 4,500 poacher cameras have been implemented in 16 countries and cost only \$250 per camera, as compared to the average of \$1000. Another example is Project WEB, a collaboration between International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and INTERPOL. Project WEB focuses on countering the online marketplace of the illegal wildlife trade through the detection of such cybercrimes. Project WEB does so by first identifying advertisements of illegally trafficked animal products and then collaborating with these platforms to prevent traffickers from selling these products. As a result of Project WEB's surveillance countermeasures, over 3,300 advertisements on online platforms were found to have been engaging in the illegal ivory trade. These findings help to find patterns and online hotspots that will aid law enforcement in the arrests and convictions of these sellers. Delegates should take into consideration limitations that may prevent nations from implementing these technologies as well as ways they can overcome these barriers.

## Questions to Consider:

1. What is your country's role in the illegal wildlife trade? Does your country have a large market for illegally-trafficked goods, or does your country supply the demand for these products?
2. Does your country have bans on goods from the illegal wildlife trade, such as ivory? If so, how can these bans be better enforced and expanded?
3. In what ways can technology be implemented or improved to combat the illegal wildlife trade?
4. How can nations decrease the consumer demand for illegal wildlife products?
5. What can be done to protect endangered species from poachers and traffickers?
6. How can nations prevent corruption from interfering with wildlife trafficking investigations?



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