



International Civil Aviation Organization

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**ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Agenda Item 21: United Nations 2030 Agenda - Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs)**

**AIRPORTS' EFFORTS AGAINST WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING**

(Presented by the Airports Council International (ACI))

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

ACI and its member airports have worked with other industry partners, conservation organizations and civil society, regulatory bodies, and enforcement agencies to contribute in achieving the 15th UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 15) on life on land, in particular, related to the fight against wildlife trafficking. This information paper provides ACI's contribution, support, and view of the global collaborative efforts against wildlife trafficking.

*Strategic Objectives:*

This working paper relates to Strategic Objective, Environmental Protection.

*Financial implications:*

Not applicable

*References:*

A39-WP/429, A40-WP/45, A40-WP/354, IATA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACI and its member airports, in collaboration with others in the aviation sector, contribute to the achievement of 15 out of 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>1</sup>

1.2 In particular, with regards to the SDG 15 on life on land, which includes a target to “*Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products*”, airports strive to work in cooperation with other industry partners, conservation organizations and civil society, regulatory bodies, and enforcement agencies to contribute in achieving the prescribed target under their sustainability initiatives.<sup>2</sup>

1.3 Wildlife Trafficking is one of the largest international illicit trade activities, generating over USD 7-23 billion annually, endangering species and hampering global nature-based tourism and trade. Within the past decade, wildlife trafficking incidents were recorded at airports in at least 136 countries in almost every region of the globe.<sup>3</sup> It may also pose public health and safety risks to aviation stakeholders, including the passengers and crews, thereby hindering the realization of other SDGs, inter alia, on good health and wellbeing (SDG 3) and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). Given the extent of this illegal activity, it is a global concern that requires concerted efforts from the member States as well as industry.

## 2. ACI AND AIRPORTS’ COMMITMENT

2.1 In 2016 ACI and other industry partners signed the ‘United for Wildlife Transport Taskforce Buckingham Palace Declaration’ by the Royal Foundation of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. This was followed by the adoption of ACI Resolution ‘Support of the “United for Wildlife Transport Task Force” Campaign’ (ACI Resolution 3/2016) at the 26th Meeting of the ACI World General Assembly in Montreal, a unilateral commitment of the airport industry to take steps to combat wildlife trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

2.2 ACI has also joined, as a Core Member, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) Partnership along with industry partners such as International Air Transport Association (IATA), conservation organizations, and other US government agencies. The Partnership brings together stakeholders to form a concerted international response against wildlife trafficking via the air transport supply chain. The Partnership focuses on activities to:<sup>5</sup>

- a) Improve data analytics
- b) Engage corporate leaders
- c) Train transport personnel

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.icao.int/about-icao/aviation-development/pages/sdg.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg15>

<sup>3</sup> C4ADS (2018), In Plane Sight: Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector, <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/in-plane-sight/#targetText=The%20report%2C%20In%20Plane%20Sight.at%20least%20136%20countries%20worldwide>.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution No. 3 ACI SUPPORT OF THE “UNITED FOR WILDLIFE TRANSPORT TASK FORCE” CAMPAIGN [https://aci.aero/Media/303fa73f-842a-4ab7-a755-1df41e3e06e1/6wpuLQ/News/Releases/2016/09-28-2016/20160928\\_ACI\\_Wildlife\\_Resolution.pdf](https://aci.aero/Media/303fa73f-842a-4ab7-a755-1df41e3e06e1/6wpuLQ/News/Releases/2016/09-28-2016/20160928_ACI_Wildlife_Resolution.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> ROUTES Partnership, <https://routespartnership.org/>

- d) Strengthen policies and protocols
- e) Increase collaboration with enforcement agencies

2.3 The ROUTES Partnership has developed a suite of materials designed to empower the aviation sector to take action, such as training modules, awareness materials, information packages, data dashboards, and awareness communication updates that are provide free of charge to aviation stakeholders.

2.4 Through the Partnership, ACI has also published a collection of best practice case studies from selected airports which present how they have taken action to combat wildlife trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

- a) Heathrow
- b) Kenya Airport Authority
- c) Royal Schiphol Group
- d) Galapagos Ecological Airport
- e) Nassau Airport Development Company.

2.5 Wildlife trafficking was also incorporated into the new ACI Europe Sustainability Strategy for Airports published in June 2019 as one of the global topics related to biodiversity protection. Pathways with recommended actions and indicative metrics to measure the achievements, as well as areas for further progress, were highlighted, along with the associated SDGs and Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI) indicators.

### 3. WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING AND AVIATION

3.1 Wildlife traffickers exploit the increasing connectivity of international aviation – targeting global hubs and airports with flight routes between source and demand countries. Smaller airports are also at risk, as traffickers fly illicit wildlife products from areas near their natural habitats to reach larger, international hub airports. In other words, irrespective of the location of any airport, there is a possibility that it may be used by wildlife traffickers as origin, transit, or destination points.

3.2 In addition, traffickers tend to change their routes constantly, making airports in any region and of any size vulnerable to wildlife trafficking. For example, one study into the trafficking of pangolins – the world's most trafficked mammal that is prohibited from international trade under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) – found that smugglers use around 27 new transport routes each year to circumvent detection and enforcement.<sup>7</sup>

3.3 Aviation sector can play an important role in halting this transnational crime, by: raising awareness of their staff and passengers on the issue; promoting a strong security culture to effectively

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<sup>6</sup> ACI Best Practice Case Studies from Selected Airports: Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade, <https://store.aci.aero/product/best-practice-case-studies-from-selected-airports-combating-illegal-wildlife-trade/>

<sup>7</sup>: Heinrich, S., Wittman, T.A., Ross, J.V., Shepherd, C.R., Challender, D.W.S., and Cassey, P. (2017). The Global Trafficking of Pangolins: A comprehensive summary of seizures and trafficking routes from 2010–2015. TRAFFIC, Southeast Asia Regional Office, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, <https://www.traffic.org/site/assets/files/1606/global-pangolin-assessment.pdf>

identify and report suspicious activities without burdening existing protocols; and, supporting enforcement agencies which need to share intelligence and information between agencies as well as with industry.

3.4 ACI and its member airports are positioned and fully committed to contribute in the fight against the wildlife trafficking. ACI will continue its advocacy efforts in support of the relevant SDG targets.

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