



ASSEMBLY — 39TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 31: Other high-level policy issues to be considered by the Executive Committee

PREVENTION OF ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING VIA COMMERCIAL AVIATION

Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information paper calls attention to the increasing challenge of transnational criminal groups exploiting commercial aviation to traffic wildlife illegally.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This information paper relates to the Strategic Objective Environmental Protection.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not applicable
<i>References:</i>	

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Transnational criminal groups are increasingly exploiting the interconnected air transport system to pursue the illegal traffic of wildlife.

1.2 The international illegal wildlife trade (excluding timber and fisheries) is estimated to be worth USD 19 billion per year, making it the fourth largest illegal global trade (after drugs, counterfeiting and human trafficking). It covers a broad range of endangered species. The trafficking of these wildlife species is perceived by organized criminals to be a high profit and low risk activity. Not only does this drive many endangered species towards extinction but it also strengthens criminal networks, undermines national security and poses increasing risks to global health.

1.3 For many endangered species, this trade poses a significant threat, with the latest data from conservation organizations revealing the critical status of many iconic species, with the extinction of tigers, elephants, rhinoceros and pangolins being of particular concern.

¹ All Language versions provided by IATA

1.4 It should also be noted that 10% of global GDP is related to tourism. Therefore, the extinction of species and the destruction of ecosystems will also result in economic impact on nature-based tourism organizations and the vulnerable communities that they support.

1.5 Wildlife trafficking is dependent on an interconnected logistics and transport network, involving air, land and sea ports, passenger and cargo airlines, shipping companies, express couriers, postal companies and freight forwarders.

1.6 While the duty to apprehend and prosecute offenders rests with national enforcement authorities, transport industry stakeholders also have a role to play in addressing this challenge..

2. **DISCUSSION**

2.1 IATA has focused on raising awareness of this emerging issue with airlines and other aviation stakeholders with the aim of supporting enforcement authorities in the identification and reporting of suspicious passenger behaviour and unusual shipments.

2.2 IATA has worked with its members to identify and review emerging wildlife conservation issues with industry relevance and to determine appropriate response strategies. In particular, IATA has produced guidance material which aims to assist airlines in raising awareness of wildlife trafficking issues with passengers and, thus, reduce safety, health and conservation risks. In addition, IATA has supported a number of awareness raising events around the world that provide airline, airport and enforcement staff with the skills and knowledge needed to identify and report illegal trafficking in wildlife.

2.3 IATA strengthened its cooperation with the Secretariat to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the 71st IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2015. CITES is a multilateral treaty drawn up to protect endangered plants and animals and which aims to ensure that the international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of species in the wild. Under the MOU, IATA and CITES have committed to promote the widespread use of agreed industry and international guidelines, standards and procedures for the transport of live animals and to develop guidance in combatting the rise in the trafficking of illegal wildlife.

2.4 IATA has participated in the Duke of Cambridge's United for Wildlife Transportation Taskforce (<http://www.unitedforwildlife.org>), along with a number of leaders from the transport, logistics and conservation sectors. On 15 March 2016, 40 industry leaders signed the Declaration of the United for Wildlife International Taskforce on the Transportation of Illegal Wildlife Products at Buckingham Palace, London and a significant number of representatives of the aviation community have subsequently also signed the Declaration. The Declaration recognizes the differing characteristics of the aviation and maritime sectors and includes 11 Commitments based on raising customer and staff awareness; improved staff training and reporting; and promotion of the Declaration across the supply chain.

2.5 The US has established a Presidential Task Force and adopted a national strategy against wildlife trafficking. IATA has joined with a consortium of international conservation organizations, as a Core Member of the US Agency for International Developments (USAID) Reducing Opportunities for Unlawful Transport of Endangered Species (ROUTES) Partnership. This five-year program aims to support the transport sector by providing information on high-risk species, routes and concealment

methods, awareness raising activities with staff, passengers and cargo customers and facilitating the reporting of suspected traffickers and suspicious cargo.

2.6 In February 2016, the European Commission published a five year Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan focused on implementation by EU institutions and Member States which includes encouraging “engagement with relevant business sectors” including those that facilitate the wildlife trade. IATA will continue to monitor developments in this area of relevance to the industry.

2.7 In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include SDG 15 relating to biodiversity. SDG15 sets a target of "tak[ing] urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna, and address[ing] both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products". IATA will work with its members to ensure that the airline sector makes a positive contribution to achieving this goal.

2.8 IATA’s 72nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) adopted a Resolution on the Illegal Trade in Wildlife which provides a clear and unequivocal statement that the airlines industry will not tolerate the trafficking of wildlife using our sector. The Resolution:

- a) urges governments to commit additional resources to address illegal trafficking;
- b) calls on airlines to increase passenger, client, customer and staff awareness about the nature, scale and consequences of the illegal wildlife trade;
- c) calls on airlines to partner with airports, freight forwarders and other stakeholders to work proactively with enforcement agencies and conservation organizations to address the problem; and
- d) suggests that airlines consider the adoption of appropriate policies and procedures to discourage trafficking through awareness programs, information sharing and incident reporting.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Assembly is invited to note the information provided in this Paper.

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