

**Forum:** United Nations Environmental Program(UNEP)

**Issue # 1:** Measures to prevent illegal wildlife trade

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### Guiding Questions as you Read

What is illegal wildlife trading?

What are different practices that take part in illegal wildlife trade, are these practices common in your country?

Has your country established protocols regarding illegal wildlife trade, are these protocols effective?

How has illegal wildlife trade impacted your country, has your country suffered from a zoonotic disease?

## Introduction

### Key Terms

Wildlife trade  
Extinction  
Poaching  
Zoonotic  
COVID-19

Illegal **wildlife trade** is a multibillion-dollar industry that depends on the illegal trade of different species of animals, plants, and parts of such, to fuel an unlawful system that has continuously harmed our environment. Illegal wildlife trade negatively impacts different economies, causes the **extinction** of different species, and is often the cause of many healthcare crises, including the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19. **Poaching** animals, deforestation of protected forests, illegal fishing, and the trading of such, all take part in illegal wildlife trade. Multiple countries are involved in illegal wildlife trade, including China, Brazil, India, Laos and many more. These countries suffer from many negative impacts caused by illegal wildlife trade, it harms the country's biodiversity as well as the country's economy, and it can also breed violence and fund organized crime. Because of the horrific effects that this devastating practice has on our environment, multiple countries have established different protocols to prevent the development of this issue, but further action needs to be taken in order to halt this issue and thereby preventing problems that often stem from this issue, including **zoonotic** diseases such as **COVID-19**, the extinction of different species, and transactional crimes.

**Comprehension Question(s):** Why is it important that countries implement protocols to prevent this issue? What are negative effects that this issue might have on different branches of your country, (ie: economy, biodiversity, etc)?



## Definition of Key Terms

**Wildlife trade:** Commerce of products that are derived from non-domesticated animals or plants, removed from their natural environment, or raised under controlled conditions.

**Extinction:** When there are no more individuals alive of a specific species of animal or plant.

**Illegal Wildlife Trade:** estimated to be a multi-billion dollar business involving unlawful harvest of and trade of animals or plants. Traded as skins, leather goods, or souvenirs.

**Zoonotic:** an infectious disease mostly caused by pathogens that were passed from an animal to humans.

**COVID-19:** a virus that caused an ongoing global pandemic that has already taken around 3 million lives. (as of May)

**Habitat loss:** A process by which natural environments become incapable of sustaining native species.

**Vertebrate wildlife populations:** Populations of wild animals that have vertebrates or a backbone.

**Poaching:** Illegal hunting, capturing, and often killing of wild animals

**Bycatch:** Unwanted animals caught during commercial hunting/fishing for a different species.

**Quarry:** Another name for the person(s) or wildlife being tracked or pursued. (Facts, Poaching )

**Spoor:** Evidence of a quarry. Divided into two types.

**Ground spoor:** Any physical evidence at ankle height or below, including on the ground. (Facts, Poaching )

**Aerial spoor:** Physical evidence of the quarry above ankle height; the sound of gunfire, smell, etc.(Facts, Poaching)

## Current Situation



Wildlife trading is high-profit margins made by high prices trading by using endangered and rare animal or plant species. The reason for it to be illegal is that vulnerable wildlife species are pushed further away into their natural habitat and naturally can't replenish their stock to keep up with the rate of human consumption. This criminal activity is called poaching. Many countries with high biodiversity have these illegal activities present. Between them are China, the United States, Thailand, Laos, India, and Brazil. The United States is part of this



list because it's a country with high transit from one country to another. To address this issue, there are three main organizations/conventions that work to solve this issue. World Wildlife fund, CITES, and TRAFFIC have been the organizations with highest influence in addressing illegal wildlife trading. Three economically powerful countries have already taken measures to address this issue: China which has already banned the global ivory trade and it has been a game-changer. Following China's steps, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom have announced that planning is being made to ban the ivory trade, with tougher actions that hopefully until the end of 2021, will make this illegal branch of illicit wildlife trading banned. It is of fundamental importance to find a solution to decrease rates of illegal wildlife trading as it will take care of various endangered and rare species around our delightful environment. Addressing **illegal wildlife trading** will find solutions for endangered species and positively impact numerous countries.

### **Zoonotic diseases and Covid 19 Pandemic**

Recently, Illegal wildlife trading has been negatively seen by the whole world as it is to be believed by some countries that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was caused on a wholesome food market where illegal wildlife trading is seen. The World Health Organization determined that COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease. Zoonotic diseases are those that are transmitted by animals to people. Other than COVID-19, zoonotic diseases include SARS, Ebola, Bird flu, and MERS.

Illegal wildlife trading plays a huge role in the production and spread of zoonotic diseases. According to the Congressional Research Service, 72% of zoonotic diseases originate from wildlife. The same source stated that zoonotic diseases that are associated with illegal wildlife trading include: COVID-19, SARS, Ebola, Simian Foamy virus, Herpesvirus, and more. Because illegal wildlife markets bring together animals that may carry diseases from different ecosystems into one location, it facilitates the spread of zoonotic diseases in a way that wouldn't happen naturally. Thus, many zoonotic diseases that have impacted the whole world, originated from illegal wildlife trading.

### **Economic impact**

From an economic standpoint, destroying wildlife has negative impacts on economies around the world. It deteriorates countries' natural capital, social stability, threatens

sustainable economic development, and undermines profit that stems from environmental leisure such as tourism. For example, the halt of wildlife tourism in the Southern African region due to the illegal wildlife trade, resulting in the lack of resources to the community that is responsible for nourishing wildlife. In Tanzania, the total revenue that is originated from tourism at the Serengeti-Ngorongoro destination equals to 500 million dollars a year, which is where the majority of Tanzania's earnings from tourism originate from, and if wildlife trading continues at its current rate, it will cause this revenue to decrease significantly. Illegal wildlife trade also threatens legal global wildlife trade, dispossesses governments of revenues and taxes, and the overconsumption of fishing stocks leads to job loss.

### **Biodiversity loss**

Not only has illegal wildlife trading created the pandemic but according to the NRDC, since 1970 the planet has lost 60% of its **vertebrate wildlife populations**, mostly caused by human causes, wildlife trading being the second biggest cause for the loss, after **habitat loss**. Examples of biodiversity loss caused by illegal wildlife trade include the elephant population in Tanzania, that due to illegal wildlife trade, decreased from 110,000 to 44,000 from 2011 to 2016, meaning that the elephant population in Tanzania decreased by more than 60%. Illegal wildlife trading has also caused the Western Black Rhinos to be declared extinct in 2011, and the world's tiger population to fall from 100,000 to under 3,500. According to the European Commission of Environment, other species that directly suffer from illegal wildlife trade include sharks, great apes, big cats, pangolins, corals, turtles, tortoises, lizards, cacti, orchids, and many more. The same source states that illegal wildlife trading is a threat to biodiversity because of habitat loss, land degradation, the threat to food security as well as impacting climate change.

### **Fueling criminal activity**

According to CSF illegal wildlife trade is considered "to be the world's 4th largest internationally organized crime", and not only does it undermine economies, biodiversity, and health, but it also fuels criminal activity. In Central African countries, trading, destroying, and poaching wildlife animals and plant species, funds many armed groups. In several countries, where links to corruption undermine law enforcement, wildlife trafficking thrives. Because wildlife trafficking is a transactional,

organized crime, wildlife traffickers tend to partner up with militias and terrorist groups. Poachers and hunters are often armed in order to kill, collect and capture wildlife, but they also intend to kill rangers, conservation officials, police, and other individuals that might attempt in stopping their illegal activity. This means that illegal wildlife trading is a practice that not only affects the lives of multiple animal species, it also affects thousands of human lives.

### Cultural effect on illegal wildlife trade

Although the illegal wildlife trade has terrible effects on our environment, it is important to acknowledge that in many countries, the practice of poaching, hunting, and the eventual trade of wildlife, stems from cultural traditions that have been around for hundreds of years. For instance, illegal wildlife trade in Brazil, traces back to colonial times, when the Portuguese took different animals back to Portugal, and it is also an indigenous practice that has influenced many generations. Another example of the cultural effects of illegal wildlife trade is the Bushmeat trade. Bushmeat is the poaching and selling of wildlife animals for human consumption. And in many parts of the world, bushmeat was a sign of wealth and a “status symbol” that allows for the connection to their ancestral culture. In Asian countries, the demand for illegal wildlife trade is often for the making of traditional medicine or other products that play an important role in their culture



**Comprehension Question(s):** What are consequences of illegal wildlife trading? What is biodiversity loss? Has that impacted your country?

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### China

China has had an extensive, drastic history in regards to the illegal wildlife trade. Tiger farms, where tigers bred to produce luxury products such as tiger bone wine and tiger skin rugs; bear “milking” farms, where bears' bile were drained for the making of traditional Chinese medicine, and more illicit centers where animals were put under extreme conditions, were common in China until a few years ago. However, China has recently banned the wildlife trade and consumption due to its influence in causing COVID-19, this holds its utmost importance when protecting wildlife because China had one of the biggest markets regarding illegal wildlife trade, and some of those, including the sea-food market in Wuhan suspected from being the source of coronavirus, was shut down by the government.

### The United States

The United States is a major hub for the illegal wildlife trade market, this is because the United States is a big transit country, which facilitates the trafficking of wildlife. According to “The US Fish and Wildlife Service Report”, The US fish and wildlife service office of law enforcement has detected shipments containing over 5.5 million parts and products that stemmed from wildlife, and over 660,000 individual animals. The US has established plans to diminish wildlife trade because it has negatively impacted the country's economy, as well as compromised the health of many. This plan includes “focus countries”, that highlight the countries that have been a major source of wildlife trafficking or have been a major consumer of products that derive from the illegal wildlife trade. The United States has the intention of assisting those countries in order to halt the illegal wildlife trade.



## Thailand

Illegal wildlife trade has been a recurrent problem in Thailand for decades. Because Thailand borders Laos and Malaysia, it makes Thailand a transit country for the illegal wildlife trade. Because of the negative impact that illegal wildlife trading has had on Thailand, the Thai government, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Wildaid, partnered up and formed a campaign called “A good life is free of killing”. The Thai government has also created the “Wildlife preservation and protection act” which endorses ten-year penalties and fines of a million baht as a judicial consequence for illegal wildlife trafficking. The measures taken by the Thai government are imperative to the environment as it pushes for the total ban of wildlife trading.

## Laos

Laos is a major hub for illegal wildlife trading. It is surrounded by Thailand, China, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia, countries that are proven to have high rates of wildlife trafficking. Local markets sell different species of animals, even though many of them are at risk of extinction. Many different types of animals are sold illegally at these markets, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. In Laos, the main reason for the wildlife trade is for the production of traditional medicine, curio production, and food. And the lack of regulations, monitoring, and law enforcement fuel this unlawful system that continuously harms the environment.

## India

In India, illegal wildlife trade continues to affect the country's biodiversity. Mongoose hair, snake skins, Rhino horns, Tiger and leopard claws, and many other animal parts, are continuously exchanged and sold illegally, to the international market of wildlife. India has strong laws and policies in place in order to prevent the trade of wildlife, however, the weak enforcement of these laws, followed by the lack of political will to solve this issue undermines the process of halting wildlife trade, therefore the country continues to suffer from the negative effects of wildlife trading.

## Brazil

Brazil is a country with the biggest biodiversity in the world, It holds over 13% of the world's animal and plant life. According to Brazil's "2018 Red Book of threatened species" 1173 species are at threat of extinction or extinct, and one of the main reasons why these species are being threatened in Brazil is the illegal wildlife trade. Historically, taking wild animals to other countries became a common practice in Brazil when it was first colonized by the Portuguese in 1500, and with time this became a lucrative practice. Brazil lacks laws and regulations that prevent this from happening, as there are many loopholes and inconsistencies with the laws that are currently in place regarding the penalties applied, this allows for criminals that take part in illegal wildlife trading to go by unpunished or receive penalties that aren't severe, and it also makes it difficult for the law enforcement to catch these criminals in the first place.

## UN Involvement

Over the past decade, the United Nations has been working with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime(UNDOC) to tackle this worldwide environmental and social issue. In 2010, the UNDOC and other 4 international bodies created an international Consortium on Combating Wildlife Trading to bring expertise from many perspectives to support countries to tackle this crime. The other 4 main international bodies that are working together to solve this problem are the World Bank, World Customs Organization(WCO), International Criminal Police Organization(INTERPOL), and finally the most important creation made by the UNEP, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild fauna and flora, most known as CITES. "CITES is an international agreement that aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival."(Dag Hammarskjöld library staff) Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations had worked to strengthen the claim that illegal wildlife trading as a direct effect on zoonotic effects, such as, Ebola, Bird flu, Middle East respiratory(MERS), Rift Valley fever, sudden acute respiratory syndrome(SARS) West Nile virus and Zika Virus disease. As of the ongoing pandemic, the world has already realized the effects of illegal wildlife trading on zoonotic diseases.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event	Illegal wildlife trade effects:
1700	First cases of poaching are recorded in Europe.	The first records of poaching trace back to the 1700's in Europe. Hunting was only permitted to the rich, and poor people started the poaching of wild animals as it was the measure they had to take in order to survive.
1900	The United States passes the Lacey act, prohibiting the sale of poached animals in between states.	The Lacey act has been put in place in order to control illegal wildlife trafficking inside the United States. According to the Forest legality initiative "The Lacey Act is a fact-based statute with strict liability, which means that only actual legality counts (no third-party certification or verification schemes can be used to "prove" legality under the Act) and that violators of the law can face criminal and civil sanctions even if they did not know that they were dealing with an illegally harvested product." Therefore, the Lacey act is a strict but effective law that has been implemented for over a century in the USA, and has helped prevent domestic cases of wildlife trading in the United States.
1918	The migratory bird treaty act was signed by multiple countries.	The migratory bird treaty act was signed by the United States, Mexico, Great Britain, Japan, and Russia. In order to protect migrating birds, and ensure that they are not to be hunted, killed, exported nor sold for profit.
1973	The Endangered Species act is signed in the United states.	The US endangered Species act was signed in 1973 and has proven to be the most effective act in place in the United States regarding the protection of endangered species as it has a 99% percent success rate. According to WWF: " 99% of species

		<p>listed on it have avoided extinction." Laws that are in order to protect endangered species, have proven to be effective when preventing illegal wildlife trade, as extra measures and preventions such as monitoring of those species, are taken, preventing the poaching and hunting of those species.</p>
1975	The convention on international trade in Endangered species (CITES) is an agreement signed by multiple countries.	CITES is an agreement signed between 80 countries, in order to ensure that measures are taken to prevent threats to the survival of species due to international wildlife trade.
1989	CITES bans commercial trade of African Ivory	A global ivory ban is imposed by CITES in order to reduce poaching since the number of elephant populations had been decreasing. Ivory is one of the main products being trafficked in illegal wildlife trade, so it is imperative that regulations and laws are put in place in order to halt this traffic. This was a big necessary advancement in the history of illegal wildlife trade.
2006	The Zakouma elephant slaughter makes the elephant population in Africa drop significantly.	In the Zakouma national park in Chad, a series of poaching massacres happened, which compromised the lives of hundreds of elephants.
2008	The Lacey act of 1900 was amended in order to include plants and plant products.	When this act was amended, it set in place "the world's first ban on trade in illegally sourced wood products" according to the Forest Legality Initiative. This amendment had two major components that were added to the agreement; "a ban on trading plants or plant products harvested in violation of the law; and a requirement to declare the scientific name, value, quantity, and country of harvest origin for some products."



2012	In Chad, troops are sent after elephant poachers, and smugglers of ivory.	The president Idriss Deby sent helicopters and troops to catch elephant poachers. As elephant poaching is very present in Africa, President Derby's actions are a landmark in the history of preventing poaching and illegal wildlife trade.
2016	EU action plan is endorsed by the European Union environment ministers in order to halt wildlife trafficking.	In february 2016, a "communication on the EU action plan against wildlife trafficking" was adopted by the European commission. This was imperative to preventing illegal wildlife in the EU, as it "sets out a blueprint for joined-up efforts, to fight wildlife crime inside the EU, and for strengthening the EU's role in the global fight against these illegal activities." according to the european commission.
2020	COVID-19 pandemic starts as a result of an illegal wildlife trade market in Wuhan China.	COVID-19 was a breaking point for illegal wildlife trade, as the whole world was impacted by its consequences. The current pandemic is a historical landmark, and was a turning point for many country's policies in the protection of wildlife. For instance, the coronavirus pandemic made China review its laws regarding illegal wildlife trade, and several wildlife markets were closed off by the government.

## Past International Action

### The convention on international trade of endangered species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

CITES is an international agreement currently signed by 183 countries, that provides a framework for laws that should be implemented in the different parties regarding the protection of wild fauna and flora, concerning the trade of such specimens in order to prevent threats to the survival of those species. CITES has drafted multiple plans that are currently being put into action by several countries, such as the "CITES national Ivory

action plans”, that enhances control in ivory markets and ivory trade, and ensures the diminishment of illegal ivory trade, and the “CITES Rhinoceros enforcement task force” which is responsible for overseeing matters that regard the illegal trade of rhinos' horns, and guaranteeing the security of rhinos. Those are just a few examples of the work that CITES has done, as it plays a paramount role in halting illegal wildlife trade.

### **EU action plan against wildlife trafficking**

The European commission established a plan in order to place efforts into fighting illegal wildlife trade. These efforts include: a better and stronger enforcement, more cooperation, and an overall more effective prevention. This action plan is being implemented by the EU, commission services, EEAS, Europol and eurojust, and its member states including: Portugal, Netherlands, France, Germany and many more. This plan has been very effective in the European Union and has continuously prevented the trafficking of wildlife animals.

### **London conference on the illegal wildlife trade**

The London conference was hosted by the UK in 2018, representatives from many countries attended the conference including: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Greece and many more. This conference highlighted the importance of halting illegal wildlife trade. This conference discussed illegal wildlife trade as a “serious and organized crime” and discussed issues that often stem from wildlife trade, such as national security issues, given that illegal wildlife trade facilitates networks that enable money laundering, weapons, drugs, human trafficking and modern slavery. Solutions from these issues listed in this conference include. “Further reducing barriers to law enforcement collaboration, both internationally and within countries, is vital to ensure we deploy the full range of tools and techniques for combating serious and organised crime.”, “increase action to tackle the illicit financial flows associated with wildlife trafficking and related corruption, including the increase of use of financial investigation techniques and public/private collaboration to identify criminals and their networks.” (gov.uk) and more.



## Possible Solutions

In this estimated US\$23 billion annually illegal industry, as wildlife trading rates increase exponentially, countries should be more than encouraged to analyze the measures to address illegal wildlife trading to diminish the danger of over one million plant and animal species threatened to extinction. These are some recommended actions to solve this issue: *Create* campaigns to show the population the importance of banning wildlife trading, educating--educating people will make them further think and analyze if buying products that derive from wild and domestic animals is really worth it. *Promote* banning materials that come from wildlife animals as economically powerful countries have already shown great steps to solve this problem through banning certain trading materials. If undeveloped countries would need further financial assistance to create a system that would track the banned materials, they could call upon other countries for help. *Promote* further assistance to international security agencies, police departments, and local authorities. (technological tools) Africa; many rangers die because of hunters. *Providing* technological tools could benefit a lot the tracking of hunters around smaller african villages. *Placing* severe consequences on doing these acts. For instance: Brazil lacks thorough enforcement of wildlife law, and that's why there are so many crimes regarding wildlife in Brazil that go unpunished; there are many loopholes in the law. *Adapt* programs that monitor endangered animals. With

technological tools, controlled monitoring of endangered animal populations can be made. Financial assistance can be given by powerful socio-economic countries to undeveloped areas.

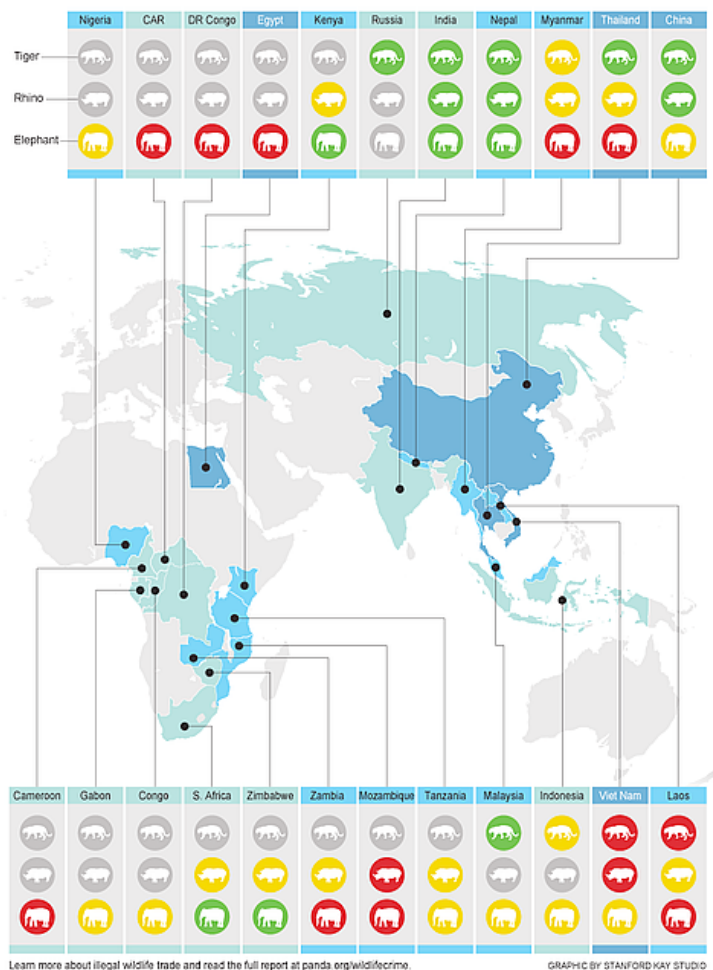
## WWF Wildlife Crime Scorecard

### GRADING COUNTRIES COMMITMENTS TO FIGHTING ILLEGAL TRADE OF ELEPHANT IVORY, RHINO HORN AND TIGER PARTS

Scores were based on country compliance during the period between June 2010–June 2012

- Some progress in key aspects of compliance and enforcement
- Failing on key aspects of compliance or enforcement
- Failing on key aspects of compliance and enforcement
- Insufficient data or not applicable

TRADE PARTICIPATION: ■ PRIMARILY ORIGIN ■ TRANSIT AND ORIGIN ■ PRIMARILY DESTINATION





## Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This issue links to the “life on land” sustainable development goal. The “life on land” SDG enables and promotes the overall preservation of the environment and biodiversity, it “protects, restores, and promotes sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combats desertification, and halts and reverses land degradation and halts biodiversity loss” (United Nations). Thus, halting illegal wildlife trade would be imperative to stop biodiversity loss, and achieve the preservation of our environment, since thousands of species are threatened and in risk of extinction due to illegal wildlife trade.

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Feel free to use all websites provided.

## Useful Links for Research

I. Country profile:

[https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/wildlife\\_practice/problems/illegal\\_trade/wildlife\\_trade\\_campaign/scorecard/](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/wildlife_practice/problems/illegal_trade/wildlife_trade_campaign/scorecard/)

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country\\_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)

<https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

II. United Nations Environmental Program

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/three-ways-united-nations-environment-programme-works-address-illegal-trade>

III. Agencies that further assist in solutions to this issue

<https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>

<https://wwf.panda.org/>

[www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-wildlife-trade](http://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-wildlife-trade).

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/wildlife-trafficking-149079896/>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/covid-19-and-wildlife-trade-perspectives-and-proposed-actions>

<https://www.traffic.org/>

IV. Tips

- A. Be sure to use official websites. Preferably websites from governmental offices, organizations and informatic data. If there is a non-official website used, be sure to research more about that website to further acknowledge how reliable the website is. Other delegates can question how reliable the information is.
- B. Plagiarism is **not** allowed in PANAMUN. Try to cite all websites used and quote certain speeches.
- C. Be sure to understand your country and understand how this issue impacts

your delegation.

- D. Be sure to be up to date with the information regarding this issue as it is an issue that has seen a surge on its importance to our world!
- E. Take notes on whatever any delegate says, this could help the delegates be aware of who they can and should be working with!
- F. If it is your first time, don't be scared! All the chairs present are more than excited to help you guys out!