



Remarks by Ghada Waly

UNODC Executive Director

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to join President Pleyer and my distinguished colleagues to address how we can join forces and achieve greater impact in combatting crimes that affect the environment.

As the UN Secretariat body tasked with addressing transnational organized crime, drugs, corruption, and terrorism, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime helps countries to target the criminal networks driving environmental crime.

For the year ahead, we will focus on expanding this work across our mandate areas, and building new partnerships, including to counter the corruption and money laundering facilitating poaching and cross-border trafficking.

I welcome the priority attention FATF has given to combatting money laundering linked to crime and the environment. UNODC was also pleased to co-lead the report on this topic along with FATF.

Along with UNEP, CITES, FATF and other partners, we have raised global awareness of the criminal elements driving biodiversity loss, pollution and other planetary threats amplifying climate change, and of the need for law enforcement and criminal justice responses to mitigate these threats.

For too long, organized criminal groups have illegally exploited flora and fauna as a low-risk, high-profit activity that could be pursued with impunity, in every region of the world.

The 2020 UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report shows the insidious reach of wildlife, forest, and fisheries crime, with criminal networks diversifying the resources they exploit, while using the same corrupt networks to move different illicit goods.

UNODC's World WISE database, which contains seizures from 149 countries and territories, shows that nearly 6,000 species were seized between 1999 and 2019, including mammals, reptiles, corals, birds, and fish.

It also shows that no single species accounted for more than five per cent of the seizures, and no single country was identified as the source for more than nine per cent of the total number of seized shipments.

The continuing COVID-19 crisis has further heightened the urgency of our efforts to stop this illegal trade. The potential role of wildlife trafficking, which by definition circumvents proper sanitary controls, in contributing to the spread of zoonotic diseases is a risk we cannot afford.

Other crimes affecting the environment, notably waste trafficking, as well as illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals and stones, are also rising, further threatening human health and the world around us.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources is also being used to finance terrorist activities, as highlighted by Interpol and Europol.

Many of the commitments made at the recent COP26 in Glasgow, including pledges to halt deforestation, can only be achieved if determined steps are taken to prevent and counter crimes such as poaching, illegal logging, corruption, and money laundering.

UNODC is supporting countries to take such action by improving legal frameworks; building judicial and law enforcement capacities; and strengthening international cooperation as well as the implementation of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing frameworks.

Our Office offers "crime scene to court" assistance on the entire spectrum of crimes that affect the environment, through a dedicated UNODC Global Programme for Combating Wildlife and Forest Crime, which has provided support to over 40 states.

The Global Programme also seeks to reduce demand and illicit supply related to wildlife, forest, fisheries and mineral products, through the development of alternative livelihoods, as well as through awareness raising, undertaken in close collaboration with civil society.

The sustainability of our measures to stop nature loss ultimately depends on supporting local communities most affected by these crimes, and providing youth with viable economic opportunities.

At the same time, UNODC works through the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime, with our partners at CITES, Interpol, the World Bank and WCO.

The Office also expects to continue the Law Enforcement Assistance Programme, or LEAP, a joint UNODC and INTERPOL programme providing assistance to countries in South-East Asia and Latin America to reduce tropical deforestation.

Furthermore, UNODC is helping to go after the proceeds of these crimes, drawing upon our long-standing technical assistance programmes to combat corruption, money laundering, and terrorist financing, and in cooperation with partners such as the World Bank.

UNODC has provided mentoring as well as training on financial investigations linked to environmental crime in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific.

We will soon launch a new training tool for investigators on the complex linkages in the wildlife crime supply chain.

UNODC has also published guides on managing corruption risks in the wildlife and fisheries sectors, and a new guide on addressing corruption that drives forest loss will be released early next year.

Alongside our work to mainstream crime responses in environmental protection, UNODC is also stepping up efforts to mainstream the environment in the global crime prevention and criminal justice policy arena.

UNODC has helped to place crimes that affect the environment high on the agenda of Member States, including through the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption.

In fact, the ninth session of the COSP to the Convention against Corruption is being held next week in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, which will also be the location of the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in November 2022.

At COSP 9, States Parties will build on a resolution adopted at the previous session on corruption and crimes with an impact on the environment.

The ninth session is an opportunity to further expand partnerships, including with the private sector and civil society, and to drive awareness of the need for anti-corruption and anti-money laundering responses to crimes affecting the environment.

I encourage you all to follow the proceedings in Sharm El-Sheikh next week, and work with us to further sharpen law enforcement and criminal justice responses to prevent and halt the illegal exploitation of natural resources, for the sake of people and planet.

President Pleyer, my thanks once again for inviting me to this important conference. I wish you fruitful discussions.

Thank you.