



**4 March 2015, New York**

**Informal meeting of the plenary to commemorate World Wildlife Day  
convened by the President of the General Assembly**

**Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States**

**delivered by**

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Mister President, your Excellencies,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Yesterday, the world celebrated World Wildlife Day with a huge number of events across the world, including one here in New York at the Central Park Zoo. We are glad many government representatives participated to the event that also featured a video message<sup>1</sup> from the European Commissioner for Environment Fisheries and Maritime Affairs Karmenu VELLA, who reiterated Europe's strong concerns and commitment to fight wildlife crime.

Today, we want to send this political message to the UN General Assembly, a message of strong support for the UN's role in protecting wildlife and tackling wildlife trafficking. The wildlife crisis that the world is currently facing threatens many of the values that are at the core of the UN system and of the European project.

When criminals kill elephants for their ivory, rhinoceroses for their horns, tigers for their skins, pangolins for their scales, sharks for their fins, when they clear forests of their most precious trees, they destroy the invaluable natural heritage of all of our citizens across the globe. But in addition to the loss of biodiversity, these criminal activities are undermining the sustainable development of entire regions. They are depriving rural communities of precious resources and livelihoods as well the income that they generate.

The illicit trafficking of wildlife benefits criminal networks and can also be used as source of financing for armed groups, thereby undermining national and regional stability, in particular in context of weak institutions. The revenue generated from these illegal activities can, in some cases, contribute to fuelling existing conflicts or even support terrorist activities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.wildlifeday.org/content/speeches>

We note, in this regard, that the support to armed groups or criminal networks through the illicit trade of wildlife and wildlife products has been established by the Security Council as a listing criterion in some targeted sanctions regimes.

Thus, Mr President, wildlife trafficking is a multi-faceted issue. So we need to deal with wildlife crime from various angles, including biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, poverty reduction, fight against corruption, organized crime and criminal networks and the support for legitimate and accountable institutions, and the promotion of the rule of law.

Mr President,

The EU and its Member States are stepping up their own efforts in a holistic manner: amongst them, we are currently developing strategies for more targeted provision of financial support for wildlife conservation and we are working on strengthening further enforcement against wildlife crime within the EU.

National and regional solutions are crucial. But because wildlife crime is a global and multifaceted problem, it calls for a clear response from the UN system. The CITES Convention remains the primary international agreement dealing with wildlife trade and its actions should be relentlessly supported. But beyond CITES, many different UN bodies – including UNODC, UNDP and UNEP – play an important, complementary role and have specific expertise, which they can bring to the table to address the problem.

Therefore, last year the EU and the African Group promoted a resolution for adoption by the first UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), which recognized the need for more UN action and called for a UNGA resolution on the matter. We are delighted to hear today from the co-chairs of the Group of Friends on “Poaching and Illicit Wildlife Trafficking” that a draft is being prepared and that negotiations will start soon.

A GA resolution should aim at promoting buy-in from all States, and all sections of government within States, way beyond the environmental community. This would send a much needed political message from the General Assembly, which would also strengthen the role of the UN Secretary General to coordinate and encourage further synergies in the work of the different parts of the UN system. Just like at national level, coordination in the UN is essential to avoid duplication and waste of resources.

To conclude, Mr President, the EU and its Member States stand ready to contribute constructively to the negotiations towards a robust GA resolution on wildlife crime. This will be an important step in the battle in which we are all engaged. We trust that as of next World Wildlife Day we will be able to report that the General Assembly has given its support to fighting crimes against wildlife.

I thank you.