

## **Informal meeting on Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units**

### **at the request of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics**

Geneva and virtual, 5-6 July 2023

## **Recommendation: Inclusion of a brief general section on combatting illegal wildlife trafficking in containerized shipments**

This document proposes initial revisions on the trafficking of wildlife products in containers, which we recommend adding to the CTU Code.

The submission is made for and on behalf of partner NGOs working together to detect and combat illegal wildlife trafficking – Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), TRAFFIC, United for Wildlife (UFW), and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

### **Background**

Maritime trade is highly vulnerable to the trafficking of illegal products. In 2022, maritime seizures accounted for over 50% of the cumulative weight of seized elephant ivory, rhino horns, and pangolin scales across all transportation types. Furthermore, there was a 37% increase in the total weight of products seized in the maritime sector between 2021 and 2022 (C4ADS Wildlife Seizures Trends, 2022).

Presently, the illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is often a low-risk and high-profit business often run by well-organized transnational organized criminal groups, which are primarily behind the transport of wildlife and timber contraband through containerized shipping. There is also evidence of convergence between IWT and other forms of serious crime (FATF, 2020), including money laundering, financial crime, and corruption.

No country is untouched by this serious crime, which negatively impacts biodiversity, human health, national security, and socio-economic development, and lines the pockets of organized criminal groups (UNODC, 2020). Illegally transported wildlife also does not undergo hygiene, sanitary, and phytosanitary controls and, therefore, can potentially contribute to the spread of zoonotic diseases, such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic that started in early 2020.

Container shipping is the dominant method used for smuggling large quantities of non-live, non-perishable wildlife parts and products such as elephant ivory, pangolin scales, and timber, although some perishable commodities are occasionally smuggled using refrigerated containers. This is due to the vast opportunities to smuggle through shipping containers, large volume of trade, the nature of “just in time” shipping, inconsistent port controls, sophisticated concealment methods and a lower likelihood of detection.

With less than 2% of containers physically examined by customs, private companies play a critical role in exercising due diligence to strengthen the integrity of supply chains in order to stop illegal wildlife shipments. Combatting IWT is a shared responsibility, and by recognizing the importance of the issue, applying best practices, and being vigilant, these parties can secure the maritime trade supply chain from criminals.

**The following revisions are proposed:**

Our recommendations are mostly focused on applying due diligence, training of the front line personnel, and facilitating monitoring activities.

Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.3. Security

Item 1.3.2 – following “Furthermore, the World Customs Organization (WCO) has developed a SAFE Framework of standards to secure and facilitate global trade.”, add “the IMO Guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic”.

Chapter 2. Definitions.

Add the definition of “IWT, Illegal Wildlife Trafficking” as illegal transportation or trafficking of wildlife in the form of export, re-export, trans-shipment and import in contravention of international law and national legislation of the country of origin restricting export (The IMO Guidelines, FAL.5 / Circ.50).

Chapter 4. Chains of responsibility and information

## 1. Expand the wording at item 4.1.4

After “All persons involved in the movement of CTUs also have a duty to ensure, in accordance with their roles and responsibilities in the supply chain, that the CTU is not infested with plants, plant products, insects or other animals, or that the CTU is not carrying illegal goods or immigrants, contraband or undeclared or misdeclared cargoes”,

add that All persons involved in the movement of CTUs also have a duty to ensure that “the CTU is not carrying misdeclared or undeclared cargoes, including wildlife or timber”.

## 2. Add at 4.2. we suggest adding the new item as 4.2.13

“All parties should check the integrity of the CTU and its seal in order to prevent possible intrusions and access to sealed containers for smuggling of wildlife and timber contraband in legitimate shipments.”

## 3. Add at 4.2. we suggest adding the new item as 4.2.14

“All parties should set up a procedure to report all suspicious cases or incidents of misdeclared or undeclared wildlife shipments with all parties involved and customs and law-enforcement authorities. It is important that any incidents with shippers and/or consignors misdeclaring or trying to conceal wildlife shipments be identified and reported on arrival.”

### Chapter 11. On completion of packing

In section 11.3. Documentation, we suggest adding a new item 11.3.7: “If any wildlife products, including plants and timber , are declared by shippers, these shipments need to be double checked by a responsible person who is familiar with the legal provisions of CITES and the IMO Guidelines<sup>1</sup> and the risks involved and the reporting measures that should be taken in case of strong evidence of smuggling.”

### Chapter 13. Training in packing of CTU.

Add new item 13.3.3 “Persons responsible for planning and supervision of packing as well as personnel responsible for the actual packing should receive appropriate education and training about the business risks associated with illegal wildlife trafficking and the latest trends in the concealment methods and trafficking routes used by criminals. Front line staff are the gatekeepers for accepting or rejecting shipments; therefore adequate and frequent training is needed.”

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<sup>1</sup> IMO Guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic