

Regional Enforcement Strategy to
Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade in
Central Asia 2015-2018



About the strategy

In September 2015 the first ever regional workshop focused on combating illegal wildlife trade in Central Asia was held in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek. The workshop brought together representatives of environmental and law enforcement agencies and international conservation organizations from across the region, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. The workshop was supported by INTERPOL, UNDP, the Snow Leopard Trust, and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystems Protection Program (GSLEP).

A key outcome of the workshop was agreement among all agencies to implement a Regional Enforcement Strategy to Combat Illegal Wildlife Trade in Central Asia and establish the Snow Leopard and Wildlife Enforcement Network (SLAWEN).

The strategy provides a high-level overview of SLAWEN's strategic direction and key areas of focus for the period 2015-2018. It will take effect on 23 October 2015, in acknowledgement of International Snow Leopard Day, and be reviewed annually.



Snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*) are found in the mountains of 12 countries across Central Asia. There are between 4,000 and 6,500 of these endangered big cats left in the wild.

Our goal

In accordance with the Bishkek Declaration¹, all participating countries to take immediate action to develop effective mechanisms to stop poaching, and illegal trade and trafficking of snow leopards and other wildlife by adopting comprehensive legislation, strengthening national law-enforcement systems, and enhancing national, regional and international law enforcement collaboration, communication and cooperation.



¹ The Bishkek Declaration on the Conservation of the Snow Leopard, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, 23 October 2013.

Our priorities

The participating countries, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan recognize that priority wildlife crime occurs as a result of poaching, trafficking and trade primarily in snow leopards, bears, ungulates and hunting birds.

- While snow leopards are traded live as cubs, they are also killed and their skins and possibly other body parts exported.
- Ungulates are primarily poached for illegal trophies and meat, and more recently ibex are being sought from Middle Eastern nations for supposed medicinal use of their intestines.
- Hunting birds, mostly live, are smuggled to the Middle Eastern countries and sold into the pet trade.

All four participating countries acknowledge that they are used as transit countries, passing on the wildlife products to a neighbouring country and ultimately reaching destinations either towards East Asia, the Middle-East, Europe or America. Simultaneously, the four countries are also serving as destinations for a small proportion of the illegally trafficked wildlife products. The black markets within the countries function not only as selling points, but also as transit points.

All participating countries recognize that several other criminal activities, punishable to a variable extent under the law of the land go hand in hand with the illegal wildlife trade. These include corruption, drug trafficking, illegal use of guns, use of chemicals or poisons, fabrication of documentation and causing wild fires.

Our challenges

- A key challenge for participating countries is to develop effective enforcement strategies to be able to respond to the increasing convergence between wildlife trafficking and other serious crime types including, but not limited to, corruption, drug trafficking, weapons offences and financial crime.
- All participating countries recognize that the lack of capacity and qualification of employees (including frontline staff) of authorized bodies in the field of environment protection, low incentives, lack of accountability, and poor coordination between organizations are the main challenges to implementing effective law enforcement strategies to combat wildlife crime in the region.

Snow leopards are known for their fur, which are highly valued in several countries for garment making. Their bones and other body parts are in demand for use in traditional Asian medicine and wild snow leopards are sometimes captured for private animal collections in Central Asia.





Partnership with local communities can be one of the most effective tools to reduce illegal poaching and trade of wildlife.

Our opportunities

- Greater impact can be obtained in controlling illegal wildlife trade by coupling it with existing legal frameworks for other serious crime types,
- Establishing mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration and cooperation between ministries, law enforcement officials, and representatives of customs and border protection,
- Providing appropriate and targeted training to frontline staff including rangers, police, customs officers and border service personnel is essential,
- Publicity via conventional and social media can be effectively used to educate the public and promote the rule of law,
- Cooperation with international organizations such as INTERPOL, CITES, UNEP and WCO is essential,
- Work more closely with law enforcement agencies of the participating countries including experts in combating corruption and other financial crimes, drug trafficking, and with National Central Bureaus (INTERPOL) to prevent wildlife crime,
- Regular trans-boundary meetings between environment enforcement, customs and border officials is essential,
- There is a need to establish multi-disciplinary wildlife enforcement networks,
- There is a need to improve capacity and provide incentives to encourage frontline staff, and
- There is a need to establish a Regional Wildlife Enforcement Network, guided by strong leadership, expertise, governance and accountability.

Action points

1. National Environmental Security Task Forces (NEST)

At a national level, a multi-agency response is needed to combat the threat posed by wildlife crime. This multi-agency network will be referred to as a National Environment Security Task Force (NEST), which is designated to nationally address and combat wildlife crime through a coordinated, collaborative and strategic response.

The NEST shall be composed of nominated experts from wildlife agencies, police, customs, and NGOs. It will also include experts in investigations, intelligence, prosecutors, and National Central Bureaus with support from INTERPOL's Environment Security Sub-Directorate.



The purpose of the NEST is to bring together law enforcement agencies and their respective areas of expertise around a common mission or goal.



2. Regional network

A network of key officials from participating countries will be established. It will include the National Focal Point of the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme and representatives of National Central Bureaus (INTERPOL) from each participating country, as well as wildlife, customs and border agency officials. The focus of the network's activities, within the GSLEP framework, will be on common themes that cut across international boundaries in providing greater control over illegal poaching and trafficking of wildlife.

The regional network will meet once every year to review the strategy, discuss the status of the situation, emerging threats, challenges and opportunities, and suggest modifications to the NESTs accordingly. The meetings will provide opportunities to highlight success stories as well as opportunities for improvement. A key role of the regional network is to share intelligence, conduct joint operations, identify capacity building opportunities and advocacy.

The regional network will be known as the Snow Leopard and Wildlife Enforcement Network (SLAWEN). This network will operate in the spirit of cooperation between the participating countries, agencies and relevant non-government organizations. It will work to complement, support and collaborate with existing formal networks such as South Asian Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) and the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEANWEN) and provide a comprehensive conduit for these networks across Central Asia and in particular snow leopard range countries that currently are not members of SAWEN or ASEANWEN.







Enforcing the laws that protect snow leopards can come with high cost, and it is difficult to catch poachers in the remote and rugged habitat where snow leopards live.

3. Capacity development

The SLAWEN will explore and implement on-going training and development programs to improve wildlife law enforcement capabilities by drawing on experts in wildlife enforcement, operational safety and investigation techniques.

4. Forensic support

The SLAWEN will review existing national, regional and global forensic capabilities and explore opportunities to link practitioners and investigative officials to enhance wildlife law enforcement outcomes.

5. Information sharing

The GSLEP program has a Secretariat based in Bishkek. A newsletter titled 'Ilbirs' is published quarterly to share information about the progress of various aspects of this Regional Enforcement Strategy. A page will be dedicated to the trans-boundary activities of the SLAWEN.



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