



Bytes Beyond Continents:
Advancing Evidence-based Environmental Governance

Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System Event
Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade

Side Event
18 November 2016



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The Wildlife Enforcement Monitoring System (WEMS) Secretariat established under the aegis of the AIT Solutions in the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) organized an event titled **“Bytes Beyond Continents: Advancing Evidence-based Environmental Governance”** at the Hanoi Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in Viet Nam on 18 November 2016. The objective of the event was to bring together governments, development partners and relevant stakeholders to discuss the tools, technologies and systematic approaches which can enable governments to channel their concerted efforts to effectively annihilate wildlife and forest crimes and meet international commitments as well as national targets.



Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Vice President for Development of the Asian Institute of Technology chaired the event. In his opening remarks, Mr. Shrestha underscored the value of wildlife conservation to ensure human well-being. He highlighted the importance of coherent and proactive policies, information and knowledge management, and effective regional cooperation for the successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. Mr. Shrestha added that AIT, through the WEMS Secretariat, could provide a platform for capacity building of enforcement community in Asia and Africa.



Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo, Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in her statement emphasized the readiness of the Office to build on the United Nations/Kenya Conference on Space Technology and Applications for Wildlife Management and Protecting Biodiversity which outlined how space technology and applications could specifically contribute to the protection of wildlife, biodiversity, ecosystems and support subsequent capacity building for advancing evidence-based environmental monitoring.



Mr. Bonaventure Ebayi, Director of Lusaka Agreement Task Force (LATF) introduced WEMS, its implementation in Africa and value in ensuring law enforcement at local, national and regional levels. Mr. Nguyen Viet Khoi, Chief ICT Engineer of WEMS provided the live demonstration of the system and its analytical and reporting tools.

The panel members' deliberations

accentuated the need of a system like WEMS to best serve the needs of governments to curb transnational organized crimes. Dr. Remi Chandran, Specialist Researcher from the National Institute for Environmental Studies from Japan, moderated the panel discussion.

Mr. Bonaventure further explained the benefits of information-sharing for law enforcement and how WEMS has been supporting LATF and member states in ensuring law enforcement against illegal wildlife trade in Africa; while indicating challenges in raising funds chiefly for operation of regional law enforcement entities as a serious setback. He confirmed the value of incorporating scientific data like DNA and remote-sensing to enhance WEMS's capability in garnering evidence and strengthening cases against criminals.

Ms. Klairoong Poonpon, Director of Division of Administrative Affairs, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand identified national *security, trust and common goal* as three key issues to take into consideration for effective information-sharing at national and international levels, and also, indicated the possibility of utilizing regional platform like ASEAN-WEN to facilitate data-sharing for law enforcement at the regional level. Ms. Poonpon concurred to the value of ground



From left: Mr. Nguyen Viet Khoi; Dr. Remi Chandran; Mr. Bonaventure Ebayi; Ms. Klairoong Poonpon, Prof. Samuel Wasser, Mr. Surendra Shrestha; Dr. Werner Balogh; Mr. Manesh Lacoul

data, scientific knowledge and also, interagency cooperation to effectively generate evidence for compiling cases to the court.

Prof. Samuel Wasser, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology, University of Washington underscored the critical roles of relational databases like WEMS and technologies like forensics coupled with international collaboration for intelligence gathering, evidence generation and criminal prosecutions to fight against transnational organized wildlife crimes. Prof. Wasser confirmed that the DNA database can be integrated into WEMS to add scientific dimension to the information in the database. He also, highlighted the important role media plays in promoting acceptance for new technologies.

Dr. Werner Balogh, Programme Officer of UNOOSA presented the benefits of space technology including wildlife conservation and monitoring of SDGs and pointed out its value for generating evidence for policy decisions. He further elaborated the

availability of Geographical Information Systems/Remote-Sensing data and newer technologies like sensors/trackers and drones with the potential to gather information for governments' adoption, as appropriate. Dr. Balogh further clarified that UNOOSA can, apart from bringing stakeholders on space technologies together, also can support member states with advisory services and capacity building on specific space technologies.

Concluding the event Mr. Shrestha remarked that WEMS is a tool for evidence-based policy-making that allows incorporation of emerging technologies like DNA and drones. He also acknowledged the establishment of WEMS Secretariat in Asia as an excellent opportunity to build on the African experience while addressing the sensitivity around cross-border data-sharing and inter-agency trust deficit. He reiterated that collaboration and ownership among the stakeholders including media are critical for the success of systems like WEMS.



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