Asian Institute of Technology

Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand

Bangkok Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Addressing Wildlife and Forest Crimes & Attaining SDGs

Date : 28 – 30 August 2018
Venue : Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

Collaborators:

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

European Union

Lusaka Agreement Task Force

National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan

Remote Sensing Technology Center of Japan

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network

United Nations Development Program (TBC)

UNOOSA United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

On 25th September 2015, through Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the member states adopted the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlighting the global needs to address shared global challenges related to environment, enforcement and development.

The 17 Goals and 169 Targets signify the universal call for action centred towards communities' welfare, planet's wellbeing, sustainable peace and global partnerships. To convert the lofty aspirations into actions, there is increased emphasis on bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation on science, technology and innovation; development of solution focused strategies; and facilitation of capacity development and knowledge transference. The SDG 15 reflects the pledge to protect biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife; and encompasses targets to end poaching and trafficking of protected species and strengthen relevant national institutions in developing countries to combat crime.

15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products.

15.c Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Several studies have underscored the importance of concerted efforts from the wildlife conservation and enforcement communities through appropriate strategies, tools and technologies, and approaches to effectively stem the tide of wildlife crime. The SDG 16 calls for commitment in a concerted effort to combat all forms of organised crime, strengthen relevant national institutions for enhancing capacities, with participation of developing countries.

In addition, SDG 17 also calls for efforts in unison through enhanced cooperation (North-South, South-South and Triangular) on science, technology and innovation to enhance knowledge.

One year after the adoption of the SDG's; in October 2016 and its Conference of the Parties, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) introduced a new reporting mechanism, requesting member states to submit an annual illegal trade report by the 31st October of each year. Further, in September 2017, at its 71st session, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution encouraging member states to enhance their enforcement efforts, including strengthening the collection of information on patterns and flows of illicit trafficking in wildlife and to report thereon biennially. The Resolution also requests the Secretary-General of the UN to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade, and to make proposals for possible future action.

Though there is good commitment and encouragement at the international level to address the information gaps in tackling wildlife crime, there remain several technical, structural (horizontal and vertical), and response architecture related challenges at the regional and national levels in compiling information critical to undermine the determinants of organized crime and threats to peace and security in the society and globally. This was very well highlighted in one of the United Nations University reports, **Bytes Beyond Borders**, which mentions that: "the UN system is experiencing the odd circumstance of asking governments from developing countries to control poaching while simultaneously being unable to offer necessary resources (scientific, technological, and financial) for them to bring it under control." Similar observations were made during the **Tokyo Conference on Combatting Wildlife Crime** held in Japan in 2014 and; the **United Nations/Kenya Conference on Space** Technology

and Applications for Wildlife Management and Protecting Biodiversity held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2016.

Hence, to address poaching and illegal trade and to meet the targets of the SDGs, it is important for all stakeholders concerned (UN, Academia, NGO's, and Private sector) to support affected nations through new technological, infrastructural, financial, creative set of tools, technical and governance measures to strengthen their information collection, compilation, analysis and response process that underpins progress towards improving people's lives in fundamental ways.

This conference titled **'Bangkok Conference on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Addressing Wildlife and Forest Crimes and Attaining SDGs'** will bring together ministers, policymakers, technical experts, civil society groups, academics, industries, and other key stakeholders of countries in Africa Asia, and Latin America. The conference will delve into three key issues governments in the larger south are facing in their efforts to address illegal taking, trading and trafficking of protected species, outline the available (technological, infrastructural, financial and governance) support for national governments, and institute an architecture for enhanced international cooperation for developing solution-oriented strategies, devising innovative approaches and tools, and providing advisory services to advance the whole-of the-state approach in effectively tackling the transnational organized crime.

1. Science, Technology, and Innovations for Addressing Wildlife and Forest Crimes

The role of science and technology in addressing wildlife and forest crimes is a well-discussed topic and there are ample evidences where spatial and non-spatial information has been used to monitor illegal trade and poaching. Though several technological initiatives have sprouted up showcasing conceptual models on how can address a given problem related to illegal wildlife crime, very few studies have actually been implemented and tested. This conference will bring to light the success stories in science and technology where its applications are being used by the governments and other stakeholders in addressing wildlife and forest crimes in real case scenarios.

2. Information Management for Addressing Wildlife and Forest Crimes

Effective information management across borders and within national boundaries is critical to combat transnational organized crime as well as reporting progress for governments against their targets and commitments including SDGs. Imploring ideas for innovative technologies and approaches to fill probable data gaps, the capability to employ them, and the ways those new technologies and existing data infrastructure can be brought together or used in parallel to produce improved datasets are issues that need to be discussed. The conference will highlight the work of governments and other stakeholders in information management related to wildlife and forest crimes and the challenges they face.

3. Governance and Capacity Development for Addressing Wildlife and Forest Crimes

Successful implementation of SDGs and monitoring progress are dependent on good governance, creative tools, innovative strategies and organizational strength at all levels. There is a need to identify opportunities and develop and establish a capacity development facility to equip relevant stakeholders with appropriate skills, strategies, tools and techniques to ensure improved and effective response. The conference will also highlight bilateral, regional and multilateral approaches to improved governance and capacitation for enhanced enforcement for addressing wildlife and forest crimes.

Organizers:

Asian Institute of Technology

The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) is an autonomous institution advancing technological change and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region through higher education, applied research, and outreach. Established in Bangkok in 1959, AIT has contributed largely to the capacity development of the region and is actively working with public and private sector partners throughout the region and with some of the top universities in the world.

AIT Solutions, established by AIT, offers innovative solutions in technology, engineering, environment, development, and management to contribute towards sustainable development of the region through expanded engagement and delivery of AIT's research, knowledge, and expertise. *WEMS Secretariat* is established under the aegis of AIT Solutions to advance evidence-based governance for biodiversity conservation through information management, capacity development, and knowledge transference.

Geo-Informatics Center, established in AIT in 1995 to help the address the capacity need of the region on potential applications through short-term trainings, has emerged as a leading Remote Sensing and GIS organization in the region advancing RS and GIS related solutions for disaster and environmental management.

RRC.AP

The Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RRC. AP) at the AIT assists countries to advance their environment and sustainable development goals through the provision of capacity-building, knowledge sharing, policy advice, and research in three thematic areas: Climate Change, Air and Atmosphere, and Waste Management.

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The Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), established in 2002 under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, is responsible for the overall management of Thailand's national parks, protected areas, and endangered species of wild fauna and flora previously managed by the Royal Forest Department of the Ministry of Agriculture.

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