

# Why is Implementing the UNTOC Essential to Combat Environmental Crime?

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Transnational organised crime seriously impacts the environment, as the correlation was acknowledged in several UN resolutions. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is essential to combat environmental and wildlife crime. The UNTOC was accepted within the United Nations framework and adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 55/25 in November 2000. The convention entered into force in September 2003, following the receipt of the fortieth ratification document. In the last few decades, organised criminal groups have noticed the valuable possibility of exploiting natural resources, thus facilitating the entanglement of transnational organised crime and crimes against the environment. In 2018, the CoP of the TOC accepted the resolution 9/1 entitled „Establishment of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols”. In 2020, the decision was made to launch the review mechanism. The information gathered by self-assessment questionnaires will provide essential feedback on the national implementation of the UNTOC. In this article, the Author concentrates on the main connection points of transnational organised crime and environmental crime, analysing the importance and role of international instruments, primarily the Transnational Organized Crime Convention, in fighting transnational environmental crime, including wildlife crime.

**Keywords:** UNTOC, international environmental crime, implementation, review mechanism

## I. Introduction

Biodiversity loss, species extinction, and overexploitation have become core keywords for environmental law in the last couple of decades. Species extinction is essentially a natural phenomenon in the world. Still, human activities in recent centuries, particularly in the 20th century, have led to the disappearance of species at rates much higher than the natural extinction rate. Nowadays, humanity must face the fact that more than 50 per cent of the species are threatened with extinction. In 2022, the Living Planet Report published by the WWF showed an average 69 per cent decrease in monitored wildlife populations since 1970.<sup>2</sup> The leading human-induced causes of biodiversity loss are habitat loss, the adverse effects of invasive species, overexploitation, pollution and global warming associated with climate change.<sup>3</sup> One of the leading causes of increased extinction is the economic exploitation of species. Several species of animals and plants are hunted, collected, harvested and exploited for economic purposes. Exploiting the natural environment of 'wildlife', has always been a matter for people and communities. However, the indigenous peoples who believe that the natural world is sacred, have exploited the resources based on sustainability principles. The tribes consider themselves

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<sup>2</sup> Almond, R.E.A., Grooten, M., Juffe Bignoli, D. and Petersen, T. (Eds.), *WWF (2022) Living Planet Report 2022 – Building a naturepositive society* (Gland: 2022) [https://wwflpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr\\_2022\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://wwflpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> 'Five drivers of the nature crisis' *UNEP*, September 5, 2023, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/five-drivers-nature-crisis>.

as one element of the natural world, and today, we can call these communities the leaders of conservationists.<sup>4</sup> The problem began when the “taking and harvesting” exceeded the sustainable level, so the living world could no longer reproduce itself. In economic terms, the demand became more significant than the supply. However, while a shortage on a production line can be replaced within a few months or even a few days, once a living organism disappears from the Earth, it never returns. Extinction is a natural phenomenon, but as it was earlier referred to, extinction rates have been unprecedented in the last few decades. Because of these problems, the international community realised the need to create standards that protect biodiversity and species. Since the 1960s, the international community has been discussing how to regulate trade in wildlife products with the urging support of the civil sector. The most important tool of international law is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (hereafter CITES), signed in 1973 in Washington and entered into force in 1975.

In this article, the Author provides an insight into the primary correlation of wildlife crime, species conservation, international law and the role of the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. Firstly, the definition of transnational environmental crime is analysed. Then, the acceptance of the UNTOC and its influence on the global fight against transnational organised crime is highlighted. Furthermore, the recently accepted review mechanism and the states’ implementation process are mentioned. Finally, conclusions are drawn, including the main shortcomings of the international treaty and the review mechanism.

## **II. The connection of wildlife crime and transnational organised crime**

The CITES can be labelled as a well-functioning treaty system with almost universal participation.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, wildlife crime highly influences conservation efforts and the successful enforcement of trade regulations. Meanwhile, many acts that harm wildlife remain within the territory of individual states (such as poaching), and the rise of organised crime groups in environmental crime poses new challenges to law enforcement agencies. Illicit wildlife trade ensures that wildlife products and specimens, often also obtained illegally, reach the final buyer. Therefore, it is essential to identify the link between transnational organised crime and wildlife crime, particularly illegal trade, and assess the relevant international instruments.<sup>6</sup>

In the scope of the article, wildlife crime is defined as the following:

‘Wildlife crime should be understood as any act that has a negative impact on wildlife and that is subject to an adverse legal consequence under national legislation. The latter acts may appear as gathering or taking from the wild, acquiring, possessing or processing wildlife species and/or products. Wildlife crime includes illegal wildlife trade, importation into or exportation from the territory of a State by breaching the relevant regulations. Wildlife includes all species of wild fauna and flora, including all forms of their occurrence and coexistence. Wildlife crime is based on the application of criminal law under national legislation. Their characteristics include a transnational organised crime element and a propensity to corruption.’<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Indigenous people and nature: a tradition of conservation’, *UNEP*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/indigenous-people-and-nature-tradition-conservation>.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Zimmerman, M. E., The black market for wildlife: combating transnational organised crime in the illegal wildlife trade,’ *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, no. 36 (2003), 1657–1689.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Sziebig, Orsolya Johanna, A vadvilági bűncselekmény mint a transznacionális szervezett bűnözés egyik formája,’ *FORUM: Acta Juridica et Politica*, no. 8:1 (2018), 347-364.

<sup>7</sup> Sziebig, Orsolya Johanna, *Vadvilág végveszélyben, A vadvilággal kapcsolatos büntetendő cselekmények nemzetközi és uniós jogi vonatkozásai*, Iurisperitus (Szeged:2021) 43.

Transnational organised crime has long been a concern for criminologists. However, recent research has also focused on new areas of organised crime, such as trafficking in natural resources and wildlife products. Little attention has been paid to the black-market trade in endangered wildlife products for a long time despite an annual turnover of around USD 6 billion.<sup>8</sup> Wildlife crime, including illegal wildlife trade, are areas that are increasingly becoming a focus of international interest. Wildlife crime threatens the economy, future development opportunities and security of individual states.<sup>9</sup>

Over the last decades, organised criminal groups have realised the potential value of exploiting natural resources, thus facilitating the intertwining of transnational organised crime and environmental crime. The involvement of organised criminal groups in crimes against the environment, particularly wildlife trafficking, is a significant challenge for national authorities. In a broader sense, all forms of crime against the environment have an organised criminal element. Organised crime is hidden by its very nature, so traditional decision-making forms are often poorly applied. Organised crime indicators take various forms, and, in many cases, are adapted to the type of activity. When examining the conceptual issues of wildlife-related offences, it is essential to clarify the definition of cross-border organised crime. There is a consensus on the characteristics of organised crime itself, which most groups involved in such activities share. The objective of organised crime groups is no different from that of other businesses operating on the market: to maintain a certain market share and secure demand for a certain product or service. Transnational organised crime requires a high degree of organisation and a propensity for violence and corruption. When organised crime becomes transnational by crossing borders and operating in other states, criminal groups can exploit the difficulties of often socially and economically weakened states.<sup>10</sup> Transnational crime refers to acts where the acquisition, transport and distribution of goods occur across international borders or have direct or indirect effects in more than one country. Consequently, criminal action must also be taken in more than one state, usually with the help of states and/or international law enforcement agencies and international organisations.<sup>11</sup> Cross-border organised crime is considered one of the greatest threats to humanity in the current century. For this reason, several international organisations, particularly the United Nations and its relevant organisations, are working to develop targeted and effectively implemented programmes to halt the rise of transnational organised crime and dismantle existing organised crime groups.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of transnational organised crime in the literature generally distinguishes three main elements: the continuity of the act, the practice of corruption and the propensity to violence. Other definitions also mention the involvement of many persons, the pursuit of crime as an objective; cross-border operations in response to the demand for illicit products, the ability to acquire and possess significant resources, and high and rapid profit-making. Most organised crime groups that commit crimes against the environment have the above characteristics. The other characteristics are the following: engaging in cross-border illegal operations, often in response to a demand for illegal goods; encouraging government officials to engage in corruption, particularly by exploiting economically weakened countries; possessing significant resources; a hierarchical, rigid or compartmentalised organisational structure governed by

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<sup>8</sup> 'Warchol, Greg, L.Zupan, Linda and L.Clack, Willie: Transnational Criminality: an analysis of the illegal wildlife market in Southern Africa.' *International Criminal Justice Review*. vol 13 (2003) 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/105756770301300101>.

<sup>9</sup> 'Wildlife crime,' *UNODC*, 2020, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/environment-climate/wildlife.html>.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Globalisation of Crime. A Transnational Organised Crime Threat Assessment,' *UNODC*, United Nations Publications, (Vienna:2010) 25-39.

<sup>11</sup> 'International Cooperation in Combating Transnational Crime, Report on the 6th Session,' *ECOSOC, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*, E/CN.15/1997/21., 1997, 126-134.

<sup>12</sup> 'UN Press Release,' GA/SHC/3529 October 18, 1999. <https://press.un.org/en/1999/19991019.gashc3531.doc.html>.

internal rules of order, which protects the leadership, which performs organisational, administrative and ideological functions; the operation of front companies and businesses to launder the proceeds of illegal activities, money laundering; the willingness to participate in a wide range of activities and the professionalism of those involved; the maximum profit objective achievable in the shortest possible time; prolonged operational activity; organising international operations with people from several nations.<sup>13</sup>

### ***A The definition of transnational environmental crime***

Several reports emphasised the connection between wildlife crime and transnational organised crime. A report from 2016 by the Secretary-General draws the attention of states to the ratification of international conventions against organised crime and corruption, which is considered a crucial step in the fight against organised crime.<sup>14</sup> In the communication of the United Nations' main organs – especially the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council – the member states are called for the ratification and implementation of the UNTOC.<sup>15</sup> The UN Committee on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice addressed illicit international trafficking in 2007, focusing specifically on forest products.<sup>16</sup> In May 2014, a follow-up to that resolution was adopted, with a resolution on strengthening targeted crime prevention and criminal justice response.<sup>17</sup> However, there is a general reference to the need for States to do their utmost to fight organised crime and implement the analytical toolkit on wildlife and forest crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime stressed that wildlife crime is closely linked to corruption, money laundering, other violent crimes and a clear pattern of cross-border organised crime.<sup>18</sup>

Transnational environmental crime emerged in the academic literature in the last couple of decades and also appeared in public policy.<sup>19</sup> There is no universally accepted definition for transnational environmental crime in international law, so the authors have to rely on the terms of the UNTOC. Transnational environmental crime can be defined as 'cross-border trading of species, resources, waste or pollutants in violation of prohibitions or regulatory regimes established by multilateral environmental agreements, or in contravention of national laws.'<sup>20</sup> Transnational environmental crime refers to criminal natural-resource-related activities that cross national borders and harm the environment, including illicit wildlife trafficking, illegal fishing, electronic-waste dumping, water theft; illicit markets in ozone-depleting substances, illegal logging and mining. The negative effects of transnational environmental crime (TEC) is well-known. Firstly, TEC can lead to environmental and health insecurity and illegal trafficking facilitates the spread of zoonotic pathogens. TEC often occurs in low-income countries and conflict zones, boosting poverty and highly influencing the implementation of sustainable

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<sup>13</sup> 'Guymon, Carrielyn Doningen, International Legal Mechanisms for Combating Transnational Organized Crime: The Need for a Multilateral Convention,' *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, no. 53. (2000) 73-85.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/951, 'Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife,' June 16, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> For example General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/326 *Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife*, September 28, 2017; ECOSOC Resolution 2011/36 on *Crime prevention and criminal justice responses against illicit trafficking in endangered species of wild fauna and flora*, July 28, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Resolution 16/1, *International cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources*, April 7, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Resolution 23/1 (2014 májusa) *Strengthening a targeted crime prevention and criminal justice response to combat illicit trafficking in forest products, including timber*, May 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Wildlife and forest crime,' UNODC, <https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/what-we-do/toc/wildlife-forest-crime.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Elliott, Lorraine (ed.) 'Transnational environmental crime in the Asia-Pacific: A workshop report', *Canberra: Department of International Relations*, The Australian National University, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Elliott, Lorraine, Schaedla, William H., 'Transnational environmental crime: excavating the complexities – an introduction,' in *Handbook of Transnational Environmental Crime*, ed. by Elliott L., Schaedla W. (Routledge, 2016) 3. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783476237.00009>.

development goals. The ecological and social outcomes, such as economic dislocation and the loss of developing opportunities, are devastating to already marginalised communities.<sup>21</sup>

### III. Short history of the UNOTC, its main definitions and importance

Transnational organised crime poses a huge threat to national security. As a result, states are trying to combat this phenomenon through international, regional and local legislation and programming. Among international conventions, the article put the UN Palermo Convention in the centre of attention. However, many conventions have also been drawn up in response to transnational organised crime.<sup>22</sup> The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime was drawn up within the framework of the United Nations, adopted by the General Assembly on 15 November 2000 by resolution 55/25.<sup>23</sup> The Convention entered into force in September 2003, following the receipt of the fortieth instrument of ratification. The TOC has 191 state parties<sup>24</sup> and Hungary has promulgated it by Act CI of 2006. The main purpose of the Convention is to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute serious crime when the offence is of an international nature and involves an organised criminal group.<sup>25</sup>

The Convention against Transnational Organised Crime defines in detail the offences it applies to but does not specify what transnational organised crime means. Furthermore, it does not contain a list of the offences falling within its scope, so the Convention should remain applicable in the event of a change of circumstances. According to this definition, transnational organised crime includes all severe crimes with an international dimension and motivated by profit. The term covers the offences that are committed in more than one State and those that take place in one State but are planned or controlled in another. The definition also included crimes committed by groups operating in more than one State, and crimes committed in one State that substantially affects another State.<sup>26</sup> In addition, the Convention sets out precisely certain definitions of transnational organised crime. Serious crime is defined as ‘shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious.’<sup>27</sup>

An offence is considered to be international if it is international in character, if

‘(a) it is committed in more than one State;

(b) it is committed in one State but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State;

(c) it is committed in one State but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State; or

(d) it is committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State.’<sup>28</sup>

It also defines an organised criminal group as

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Meredith L. Gore at all. Transnational environmental crime threatens sustainable development,’ *Nature Sustainability*, vol. 2, September 2019. 784-786.

<sup>22</sup> For example the following conventions concern organised crime. The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances UNTS 1582 (p.95) 1988. (1990.); Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism. 2005 Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 198, OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions 1997 (1999).

<sup>23</sup> UNTS, vol. 2225, 209. p. 2000. (2003.)

<sup>24</sup> ‘UN Treaties, UNTOC’ [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-12&chapter=18&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12&chapter=18&clang=en).

<sup>25</sup> Article 3. para. 1 b).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Transnational organised crime,’ *UNODC*, <https://www.unodc.org/ropan/en/organized-crime.html>.

<sup>27</sup> UNTOC, Article 2. (b).

<sup>28</sup> UNTOC, Article 3. para 2. a)-d).



‘shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.’<sup>29</sup>

Three additional protocols to the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime have been adopted, the first on trafficking in human beings (in particular women and children),<sup>30</sup> the second on smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air,<sup>31</sup> and the third on illicit arms production and trafficking.<sup>32</sup>

### ***A The Convention’s implementation and review mechanism***

Article 32 of the Transnational Crime Convention requires the establishment of a Conference of the Parties to the Convention (CoP) to ‘improve the capacity of States Parties to combat transnational organised crime and to promote and review the implementation of this Convention.’<sup>33</sup> The primary role of the CoP is to agree upon mechanisms for achieving the goals of the Convention, for example, training and technical assistance, economic development and technical assistance, prevention, and cooperation with international and regional organisations and non-governmental organisations. Furthermore, it reviews the Convention's implementation and recommends improving the member states’ domestic acts. Information is needed from the member states to evaluate the implementation procedure.<sup>34</sup> One of the main shortcomings of the Convention is that establishing such an implementation review mechanism required a long time.

After more than twenty years of the adaption of the Convention, only a little is known how the member states are implementing the UNTOC. At the end of the 2000s the Conference of the Parties started to shift its attention to the review mechanism. The state parties disagreed on how civil society should participate in the review mechanism. Finally, the Conference of the Parties agreed to create the review mechanism in October 2018, spending more time negotiating the establishment of the treaty monitoring body than they had spent on adopting the treaties. One of the main concerns was that the treaty monitoring body would deal with ‘sensitive operational information’ concerning ongoing investigations. On the other hand, monitoring bodies usually concentrate on legislation and policies, rather than ongoing investigations. After the acceptance of the UNTOC, questionnaires were sent to the states parties to gather information about the implementation process, but only half of the state parties completed them (between 2004 and 2006). Another issue was that after 2007 a computer based self-assessment checklist was introduced, but it was available only in the official UN languages.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime held its ninth session on 15-19 October 2018 and accepted the review mechanism for the implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols by adopting resolution 9/1 entitled Establishment of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United

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<sup>29</sup> UNTOC, Article 2. (a).

<sup>30</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

<sup>31</sup> Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

<sup>32</sup> Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

<sup>33</sup> UNTOC, Article 32. para 1.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Clark, Roger S. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, *Wayne Law Review*, vol. 50. no. 1., (Spring 2004),’ 161-184.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Cecily Rose, The Creation of a Review Mechanism for the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and Its Protocols,’ *American Journal of International Law*, no. 114(1), 51-67. <http://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2019.71>.

Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.<sup>36</sup> The Conference of the Parties to UNTOC adopted, at its tenth session held in Vienna from 12 to 16 October 2020, resolution 10/1 entitled Launch of the review process of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.<sup>37</sup> In resolution 10/1, the Conference among other details adopted the self-assessment questionnaires for the review of the implementation of the Convention and the Protocols. Also, the guidelines for conducting the country reviews and the blueprints for the lists of observations and their summaries were accepted. Furthermore, the CoP decided to launch the first review phase of the review process under the thematic clusters of UNTOC and the Protocols, and multi-year work of the mechanism appended to the Procedures and rules of the mechanism.<sup>38</sup>

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime entered into force twenty years ago. Nowadays, the first review mechanism has been launched and it is yet to see, how the state parties will complete the questionnaires. As it is the beginning of September 2023, more than 60 per cent, 130 reviews have not been started.<sup>39</sup> In accordance with the rules and procedures, the mechanism is structured on four thematic clusters of articles based on their subject matter: Criminalization and Jurisdiction; International cooperation, mutual legal assistance and confiscation; Prevention, technical assistance, protection measures and other measures; Law enforcement and the judicial system.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV. Final remarks

Transnational environmental crime is one of the most significant threats to conservation efforts. TEC appears in many forms, including wildlife crime. In the following, the Author briefly summarises the challenges that wildlife crime poses to states, particularly their customs and enforcement systems. First of all, the exploitation of natural resources generates significant state revenue. For example, some developing states are rich in minerals and precious metals, but because of illegal mining, these are not used for the country's development programmes. Furthermore, some members of customs and enforcement agencies are prone to corruption, so legal standards are not implemented and enforced. Therefore, the actual scale of illegal trade is difficult to estimate. So, illegal exploitation and waste of natural resources make future development opportunities impossible to realise. As stated before, biodiversity loss already seems unstoppable, with a significant proportion of species facing the possibility of permanent extinction. Wildlife crime, including illegal trade, is hidden under legitimate trade. However, with the infiltration of transnational organised crime, additional risks have emerged for states, such as the negative impacts of wildlife crime. It is proved that organised criminal groups use the proceeds of wildlife crime to finance additional activities that are dangerous to the country's security. In addition, organised criminal groups have established networks that easily allow the smuggling and transcontinental transport of wildlife specimens or products.<sup>41</sup> From some examples, it is detectable that the profits are explicitly used to finance terrorist acts. Organised

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<sup>36</sup> Resolution 9/1,

<https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Review%20Mechanism/Resolution/English.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Resolution 10/1,

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/V20/063/59/PDF/V2006359.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>38</sup> UNTOC Review mechanism, *UNTOC*,

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/review-mechanism-untoc/home.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> General Timeline, UNODC,

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/review-mechanism-untoc/timeline.html>.

<sup>41</sup> See 'Zsigmond, Csaba, Bűnszervezetek a nemzetközi illegális állat- és növénykereskedelemben,' *Magyar Rendészet*, vol. 22, no. 1. (2022) 195-223.

crime groups involve locals and hunters to poach animals. Poachers often have better weapons and resources than the state armed forces. Finally, smuggling activities involving the mixed transport of certain illegal products – for example, weapons, drugs and wildlife species/products – are becoming increasingly common. Due to the aforementioned reasons, it is challenging to estimate the accurate scale of each activity.<sup>42</sup>

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime was adopted in 2000 and entered into force twenty years ago. In the last two decades, the member states have been implementing the regulations of the Convention, although, there is no reliable information concerning the enforcement. The CoP adopted the new review mechanism, but the process will take almost a decade to complete, and most state parties have not even started to fulfil the questionnaires. Even if the mechanism is completed successfully, without the availability of the national evaluation results, only a few open data would be accessible for academic research. The usefulness of the review mechanism is still questionable. Meanwhile, the Convention is explicitly treated as one of the critical instruments of the fight against wildlife crime, so high-level enforcement and successful implementation are needed.

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<sup>42</sup> Sziebig, *Vadvilág végveszélyben, A vadvilággal kapcsolatos büntetendő cselekmények nemzetközi és uniós jogi vonatkozásai*, 46-51.



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