

**DISCUSSION ON:
ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME, ORGANIZED FRAUD, THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF
TECHNOLOGY ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, AND THE STATUS OF
THE UNTOC REVIEW MECHANISM**

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The term "environmental crime" encompasses a broad spectrum of illegal activities, including the illicit trade in wildlife, forestry and fishery violations, unlawful waste disposal (including hazardous chemicals), smuggling of ozone-depleting substances, and illegal mining operations. Often perpetrated by networks involving business interests, government officials, and criminal organizations, these crimes inflict significant harm on the environment.

These operations drive global illegal trafficking in wildlife, seafood, timber, minerals, hazardous waste, and toxic chemicals. Furthermore, environmental crimes are frequently linked to other illicit activities, such as drug trafficking and money laundering.

Organized fraud refers to fraudulent schemes that are planned and executed by multiple individuals or groups working together with the intention of deceiving others for financial gain. This type of fraud often involves intricate planning, coordination, and execution across various jurisdictions and may target individuals, businesses, or even government institutions.

A comprehensive understanding of environmental crime encompasses threat financing from the exploitation of natural resources, including minerals, oil, timber, charcoal, and marine resources. It also involves financial crimes related to natural resources, such as money laundering, tax fraud, and the illegal trade in hazardous waste and chemicals. Additionally, it addresses the environmental impacts resulting from the illicit exploitation and extraction of these resources.

Environmental crime has far-reaching consequences, including:

1. **Biodiversity Loss:** Endangered species face extinction due to illegal wildlife trade and habitat destruction.
2. **Ecosystem Degradation:** Illegal logging and pollution disrupt ecosystems, leading to loss of habitat, soil erosion, and water contamination.
3. **Human Health Risks:** Pollution from illegal waste dumping and industrial activities poses health risks to communities living nearby.
4. **Economic Impacts:** Loss of biodiversity, degradation of natural resources, and cleanup costs burden economies and hinder sustainable development efforts.
5. **Security Threats:** Environmental crime often intersects with other forms of organized crime, such as trafficking networks and corruption, posing security risks at local, national, and international levels.

What Are the Effects Environmental Ecosystems?

Environmental crime has serious and deleterious impact on the environment and ecosystems, as well as on peace, security and development.

It is currently estimated that the scale of environmental crime (comprising different forms of crimes) is likely to be in the range of USD 91–259 billion.

Root Causes of Environmental Crimes

1. Poverty as a driver

Poverty is considered a root cause simply because it facilitates recruitments of low-level perpetrators, smugglers or couriers. It is also major cause of especially poaching of bushmeat because poor people hunt to satisfy basic needs. Poverty as a cause of poaching is associated with losses of hunting rights, dispossession of land in favour of protected areas, and lack of employment and education opportunities.

2. Demand as a driver

With large demand for anything from wildlife, timber, pulp to cheap illegal chemicals and unregistered gold and minerals, recruitment and illegal trade will continue, simply due to the lucrative nature of the business.

Buyers place higher value on illegal wildlife products when they are considered rare and uncommon, which drives up prices. If supply side antipoaching efforts are effective, they may nonetheless contribute to driving up prices. 21

3. Organized Crime-driven

After decades of efforts against drugs, prostitution and human trafficking, with laws, customs, police and prosecution efforts, these traditional crime areas are perceived as higher risk – though still thriving.

Solutions leveraging technology for international cooperation in combating environmental crime and organized fraud are both significant and multifaceted. These are:

1. Data Collection and Analysis:

- **Big Data and AI:** Advanced data analytics and artificial intelligence enable the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data, helping to identify patterns, predict illegal activities, and track environmental crimes.
- **Remote Sensing:** Satellite imagery and drones provide real-time monitoring of remote areas, detecting illegal activities such as deforestation, illegal mining, and waste dumping.

2. Communication and Collaboration:

- **Digital Platforms:** Online platforms facilitate real-time communication and data sharing among international agencies, improving coordination and response times.
- **Blockchain:** Blockchain technology ensures transparency and traceability in supply chains, helping to prevent illegal trade in wildlife, timber, and other resources.

3. Law Enforcement and Surveillance:

- **Cyber Surveillance:** Cyber tools allow for monitoring of online activities related to illegal trading of wildlife, hazardous waste, and other contraband.
- **Forensic Technology:** Advanced forensic tools help in analyzing seized materials and linking them to specific environmental crimes.

The challenges that UNODC may encounter are:

- **Cybersecurity Risks:** Increased reliance on digital tools makes systems vulnerable to cyberattacks.

- **Digital Divide:** Disparities in technological capabilities between countries can hinder effective international cooperation.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Surveillance and data collection raise concerns about privacy and the potential misuse of information.

Overall, technology plays a crucial role in enhancing international cooperation on environmental crime and organized fraud, making it more efficient, transparent, and effective. However, addressing the associated challenges is essential to fully realize its potential.