

INTERPOL GLOBAL FORESTRY CRIME CONFERENCE

Presentation notes

Venue: INTERPOL Headquarters, Lyon, France.

Dates: 4 to 6 September

Attendants: Approximately **200 delegates**, the majority being law enforcement and other government officials from over **50 different countries**, across all continents.

The Civil society and companies from the private sector were represented and invited to take part in several discussions towards the identification and the development of effective tools to combat criminal trends in the forestry sector.

In parallel to the conference, several companies and organizations presented their tools and services aiming to assist law enforcement authorities to address forestry crime.

Background

INTERPOL is an international organization that coordinates the activities of police in 192-member countries to work together to fight international crime. It **provides** a range of **policing expertise** and capabilities, supporting three main crime programs: **Counter-terrorism, Cybercrime, and Organized and emerging crime**.

In the environmental area, INTERPOL implements **5 initiatives:**

- **Project LEAF** (Law Enforcement Assistance for Forests) an initiative against illegal logging and related crimes.
- **Project Predator** works to enhance governance and law enforcement capacity for the conservation of Asian big cats and other wildlife species.

- **Project Scale** is an INTERPOL project to support member countries in identifying, deterring and disrupting transnational fisheries crime.
- **Project Wisdom** The illegal ivory trade is the biggest threat to elephants in the wild.
- **Project Eden** is an INTERPOL initiative to combat the illegal trade in waste, particularly electronic waste.

Project LEAF

The INTERPOL GLOBAL FORESTRY CRIME CONFERENCE is associated primarily with Project LEAF.

INTERPOL's Project Leaf supports member countries to strengthen the response of law enforcement agencies, identify criminals and their modus operandi as well as to disrupt transnational criminal operations related to forestry crimes. Due to the need for a strong and organized law enforcement response to illegal logging and trade, the **project enables** investigators, criminal intelligence analysts, police, forestry law enforcement institutions, customs and tax **authorities to advance and coordinate internationally their intelligence, analytical and investigative objectives**. Project Leaf collaborates with international institutions and the national Ministries of the law enforcement agencies globally, with the joint mission of addressing transnational organized crime against forests and the environment.

Project LEAF activities include:

- **Support criminal intelligence analysis to identify criminals, their networks and their modus operandi.**
- **Provide analytical support on the movement of illegal timber along the entire supply chain and ownership associations of the**

companies and vehicles or vessels involved. This may include forensic analysis of electronic equipment through support from the INTERPOL Digital Forensics Laboratory, and expert examination of forestry material, equipment and documentation.

- Issue international notices and alerts on behalf of member countries to request information on, and warn of, the movements and activities of people, vehicles and vessels.
- **Provide case-specific investigative and technical guidance through the deployment of specialized Investigative Support Teams composed of INTERPOL and national experts.**
- Organize national and regional training relevant to forestry crime, including evidence collection, chain-of-custody and operational planning.
- Convene Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings (RIACMs) to facilitate the exchange of investigative information and provide a setting for countries to collectively examine ongoing transnational cases and prepare joint enforcement actions.
- **Support the implementation of National Environmental Security Task Forces (NESTs) to ensure institutionalized cooperation between national agencies and international partners.**
- Disseminate experts' recommendations and the best practices for combating forestry crimes.
- **Enhance information and intelligence sharing among investigators and intelligence services from different countries and optimize entry of information into INTERPOL databases.**

2018 CONFERENCE FOCUS

The INTERPOL GLOBAL FORESTRY CRIME CONFERENCE focused on **5 main topics** this year.

1. Better coordinate global forest enforcement with donor coordination.

This topic has a very strong lead from the US with support from the US Forest Service, the US State Department and USAID. Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) also seems to be a leading organization in this topic. There is the move to confront international forest crime through the courts and how this can be coordinated internationally. Previously focus had been on institutional strengthening and detection.

LACEY Act in USA provides impetus for the US State department to implement prosecutions.

2. Monitoring timber along the supply chain – wood identification and other tools

This focus is primarily is to identify legality issues at the country of origin, what might be called “the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff approach”. That is because there is little credibility around the evidence provided for timber from many countries.

- There is a lot of work around standards for product identification and common approaches for reporting crime – what we call meta data.
- Large amount of work in species definitions and species identification using morphological methods and genetic markers.

There are traceability programs in place for detecting land use change, implementing supply hub models to identify supply chains, and risk assessment supply models. In our view these approaches should only be considered as preliminary activities because:

- They do not meet the fundamental requirements of identifying the true supply chain sources;
- They do not adequately map the location and capacity of the supply chain sources;
- They do not identify compliance along the supply chain with legality, sustainability, ethical or environmental standards;
- They do not track, or report materials flows.

Basically, there is still a lot of methodological and operational work required in monitoring and traceability.

3. There is a very strong focus on forest fires and law enforcement

There has been a lot of historical focus on identifying the causal factors associated with forest fires and building fire mitigation and fire fighting capabilities.

There is strong push towards recognizing that forest fires should be recognized as an environmental and civil crime.

This is a topic of significant resonance and importance to Indonesia. They are keen to reduce forest fires for environmental, health and GHG emissions reduction reasons. Our impression is that the approach taken to implement adequate fire law enforcement is still a work in progress.

4. Forest Law Enforcement – illegal logging and illegal timber trade

Country representatives from around the world gave brief presentations on their specific issues and the programs they have implemented.

In the case of Indonesia:

- The **Sistem Verifikasi Legalitas Kayu or SVLK** program Indonesia's Timber Certification program is a widely recognized as dramatically improving the performance of forest law enforcement and significantly reduced the illegal logging and illegal timber trade.
- The main problems with deforestation in Indonesia are now associated with "legal" land clearing, community-based agricultural incursion, and forest fires. Only the latter two could be broadly classified as legality issues.
- There are some issues with the veracity of the SVLK program and the associated traceability programs. Domestic law enforcement agencies have trouble accessing information to verify legality because of the perceived lack of transparency in the supply chain.

**Conversation with the Director General Enforcement Forestry:
Willingness to support prosecution of companies results in
companies reputation and ability to do business being restricted.**

5. Compliance Certification and Covert Detection Systems

A panel of technology providers discussed technical solutions to detect forest crime.

- Bureau van Dijk is a firm that tracks millions of companies worldwide. They conduct due diligence of organizations and company ownership as well as investigate investment and trading activities. These types of companies provide detailed information that can support international criminal investigations.
- EnviroCam is a company that is now offering military grade surveillance equipment to support detection of criminal activities in remote areas.
- **Ata Marie presented its systems that deploy digital transformation services for Government and Industry. Our approach is to move organizations from paper to digital, and then overlay automated monitoring and verification systems over the digital platform.**