

10. INTERPOL: ILLEGAL TRADE OF PLASTIC

Summary of role: *International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control. INTERPOL provides investigative support, expertise, and training to law enforcement worldwide in battling three major areas of transnational crime: terrorism, cybercrime, and organized crime.*

Summary of recommendations and work status: *INTERPOL Environmental Security Programme and its Pollution Crime Working Group participate in coordinated global effort in tackling the illegal trade of plastic worldwide through global law enforcement.*

Keywords/research fields: *International Criminal Police Organisation; INTERPOL; function and mandate; INTERPOL Environmental Security Programme; Pollution Crime Working Group (PCWG); illegal trade of plastic work; work; illegal waste crime, capacity building; Operation 30 days of Action, Operation 30 days at sea*

10.1 Function and mandate

The INTERPOL Environmental Security Programme (ENS) and its Pollution Crime Working Group (PCWG), in cooperation with several other key stakeholders, has shown coordinated global effort in tackling the illegal trade of plastic worldwide through global law enforcement. PCWG focuses on offshore pollution, land-based and river pollution and waste trafficking through ports.

10.2 Ongoing work

INTERPOL recognises the need to tackle illegal plastic waste trade as there has been a clear trend of this illegal trade, with 80% of the illegal goods making their way to the region of the seas of East Asia.

INTERPOL also helps train customs officers on how to recognise illegal shipments according to international and domestic law (e.g. by distinguishing scrap and waste). See: <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Capacity-building/NCB-and-police-training>.

Relevant examples of INTERPOL's activities and operations include '30 Days of Action' and '30 Days at Sea':

- Operation 30 Days of Action was conducted in June 2017, in close cooperation with the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) in Europe, and with the UNEP project, Regional Enforcement Network for Chemicals and Waste (UN-REN) in Asia. It was the largest law enforcement operation against illegal waste crime activities, including those that involved plastic waste. These crime activities focused on the illegal shipments of hazardous waste, illegal disposal of

hazardous waste and other wastes (including chemicals), illegal landfill activities and dumping sites, and unlawful recycling operations. INTERPOL reported that 43 countries came together in tackling over 650 cases of criminal and administrative waste violations and detecting over 1.5 million tonnes of illicit waste. Three of these countries were in the ASEAN+3: China, the Philippines and Thailand. Available:

<https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/5165/file/Operation%2030%20Days%20of%20Action%20Key%20Findings.pdf>.

- Operation 30 Days at Sea was conducted in October 2018, in close cooperation with EUROPOL in the European region. It was the first law enforcement operation ever led globally that dealt specifically with marine pollution 'crimes'. In this concept, INTERPOL uses the term 'crime' to designate activities that may not qualify as crimes under international law or national laws, such as illegal discharges from vessels and offshore platforms, ocean dumping, ship breaking, violations of ship emissions regulations, land-based and river-effluent pollution impacting the marine environment. INTERPOL reported that 58 countries came together in tackling close to 100 cases involving businesses relating to illegal plastic bags, which were detected only in Europe. According to INTERPOL, Regional communication and coordination mechanisms greatly facilitated joint operations and sped up information exchanges. Available:
https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/14329/file/Final%20Operational%20Report_Operation%2030%20Days%20at%20Sea_Oct%202018.pdf.