



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2009/028

Geneva, 22 July 2009

CONCERNING:

Ecomessage

1. At its second meeting (Ashland, 8-10 June 2009), the CITES Enforcement Expert Group noted that there was a very poor submission rate of Ecomessages to the CITES Secretariat and Interpol. The Group made the following observations, which were endorsed by the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting (Geneva, 6-10 July 2009).
2. Given the international nature of much of environmental crime, international cooperation between national law enforcement agencies is vital if the criminals involved are to be successfully apprehended and deterred. With the Ecomessage system, data are entered into the Interpol database where they can be cross-referenced with other entries. The system has a number of important benefits:
 - a) The cross-referencing of material can produce rapid and valuable feedback. For example, if a country reports via Ecomessage the arrest of a suspect, the Interpol database may produce information that the same suspect is wanted on similar charges in a different country, or indeed may have prior convictions to his or her name. Information on outstanding arrest warrants or prior convictions is of great interest and importance to prosecuting authorities. Furthermore, through Interpol's I-24/7 global police communications system, law enforcement officials on the ground will soon have immediate access to this information.
 - b) The Ecomessage form enables the reporting country to ask questions or make requests and, in doing so, encourages international cooperation between law enforcement agencies. For example, a Customs agency in one country may have seized contraband smuggled from a second country. The Ecomessage system allows the first country to enquire about the exporter or carrier in the second country. In the case of smuggled wildlife, the Ecomessage system also allows countries to address such issues as the repatriation and preservation of the seized wildlife specimens.
 - c) Information collected by Ecomessages and entered into the database allows Interpol's criminal analysts to study the data and begin to discern such information as the structure, extent and dynamics of international criminals and organizations involved.
3. Increased submission of Ecomessages is also needed to raise awareness of criminal activity and they should always be submitted in relation to incidents involving Appendix-I species or other significant illegal trade as determined by Parties. The Ecomessage should be considered as a valuable enforcement tool in combating illegal trade.

4. Ecomessages intended for Interpol must be submitted through the relevant Interpol National Central Bureau.
5. The Ecomessage form, and an example of how it should be completed, is attached.
6. This Notification replaces Notification to the Parties No. 2008/068 of 16 December 2008.