



United Nations
Office on Drugs and Crime

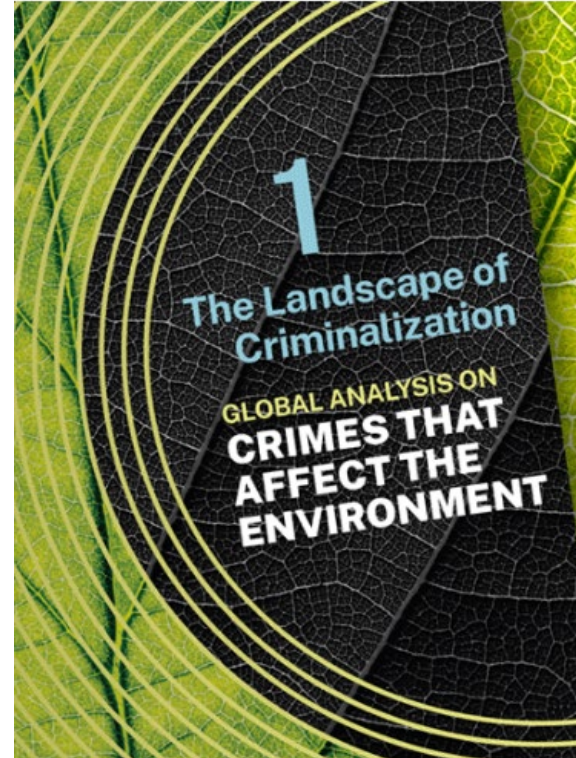
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CRIMES THAT HAVE SERIOUS IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

CPR Sub-Committee Briefing: 20.05.2025 | Nairobi, Kenya

CRIMES THAT HAVE SERIOUS IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT: TRENDS

- **Countries are increasingly using criminal law and tougher penalties** to address serious environmental offenses.
- They are often **interconnected with organized crime**, money laundering, violence, tax fraud, corruption, and obstruction of justice.



CONCEPTUALISING CRIMES THAT AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT

There is no universal definition of 'environmental crime.'

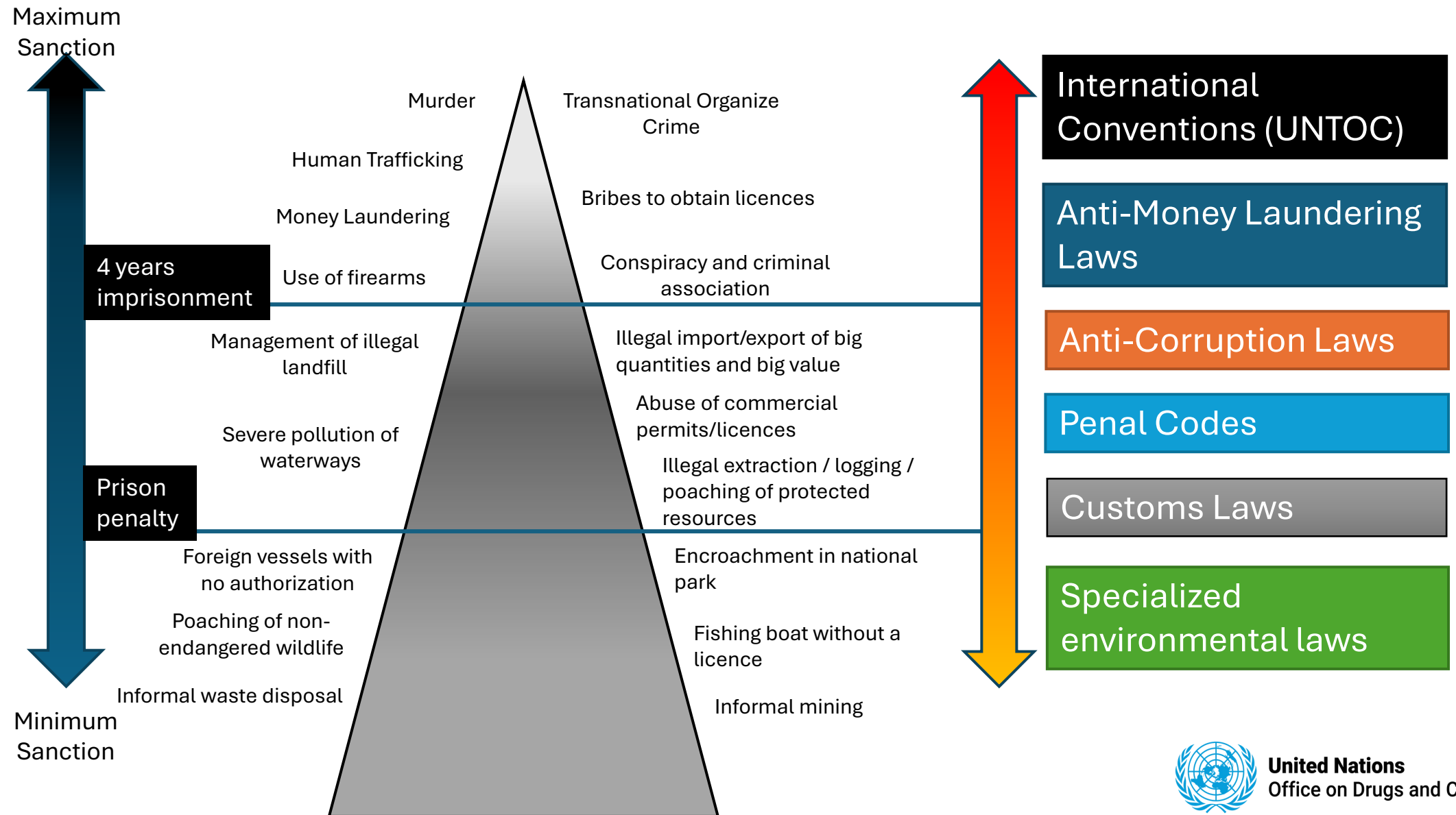
UNEP & INTERPOL 2016:

A collective term to describe

- **illegal** activities
- **harming** the environment and
- aimed at **benefiting** individuals or groups or companies from the exploitation of, damage to, trade or theft of natural resources, including, but not limited to serious crimes and transnational organized crime.



UNDERSTANDING CRIMES THAT AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT



Effects of Environmental Crimes

Undermine national security & integrity of government institutions

Cause significant environmental damage

Pose serious risks to public health & wildlife

Loss of lives & destruction of livelihoods

Pose a significant challenge for achievement of SDGs 14, 15 & 16

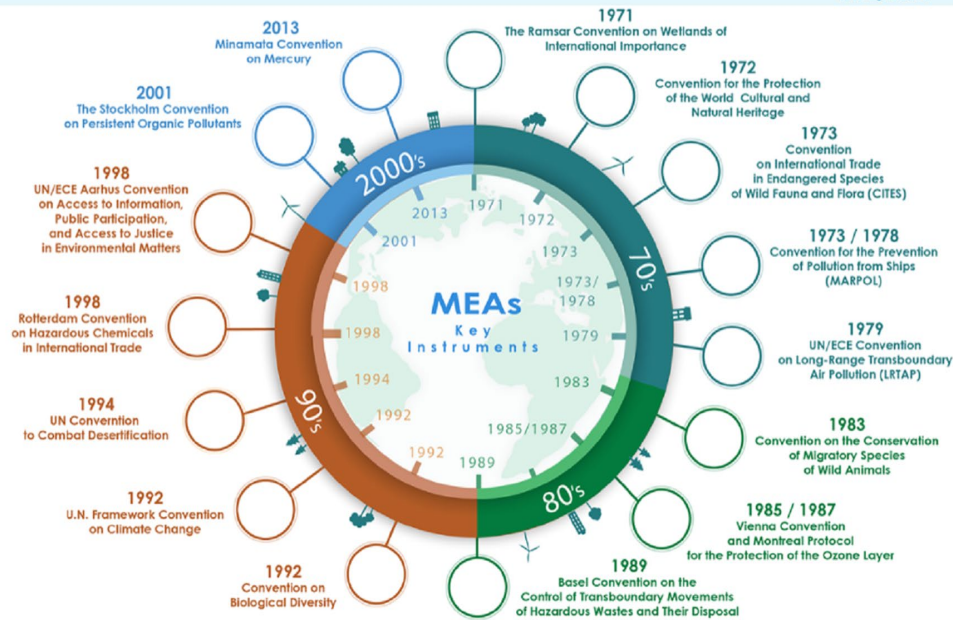


Drivers: Widespread corruption, weak institutions, poor governance, insufficient funding, lack of prosecution, limited international coordination, ineffective regulatory frameworks, poverty, demand

Perpetrators: Private individuals, organized criminal groups, Government officials, commercial/legal entities

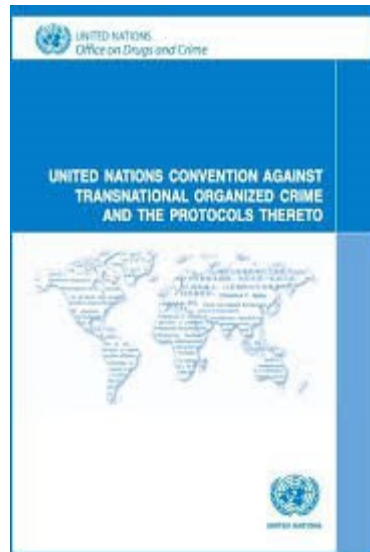
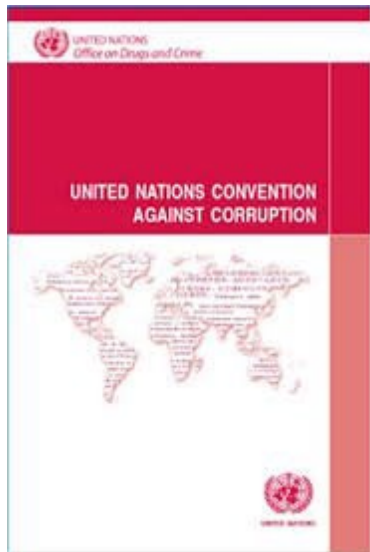
Victims

- The environment
- Communities & individuals
- States



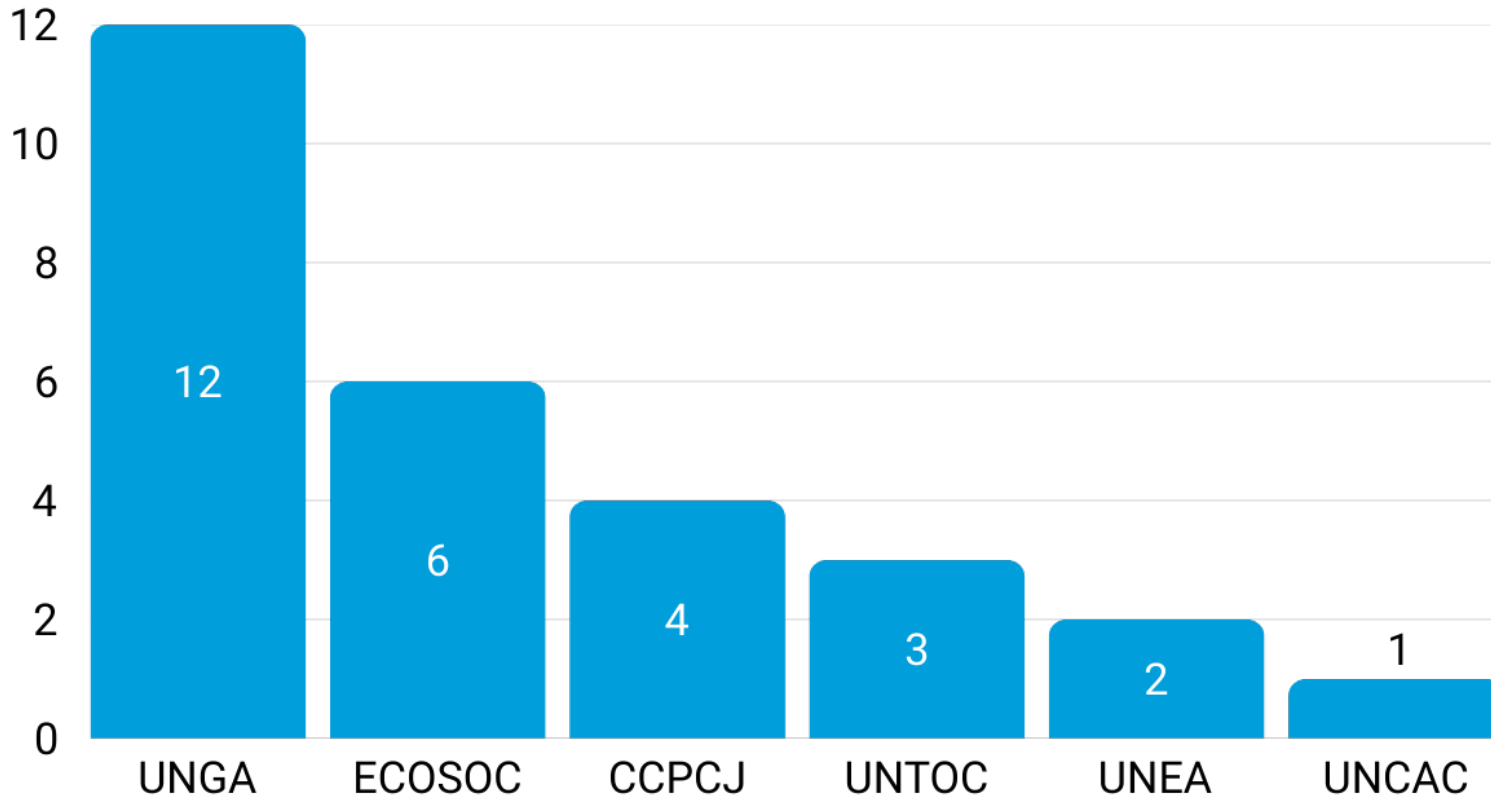
INTERNATIONAL SETTING

- While **some MEAs include provisions for penalizing environmental offenses**, most require parties to implement measures at the national level, allowing for stricter national laws, if deemed appropriate.
- Criminal networks involved in drug trafficking and cybercrime are increasingly linked to the trafficking of **environmentally sensitive commodities**, with the **UNCAC** and **UNTOC** playing key roles in addressing this issue.
- **UNTOC** Conference of the Parties adopted **resolution 12/4** requesting UNODC to convene an open-ended **Intergovernmental Expert Group on crimes that affect the environment**.
- **Council of Europe** – Committee of Ministers adopted a new **Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law** (14 May 2025)



INTERNATIONAL SETTING

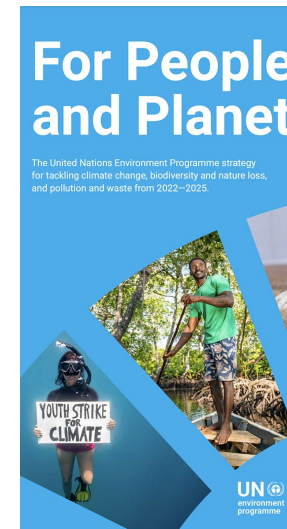
RESOLUTIONS ON CRIMES THAT AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT



- UN General Assembly Resolutions (76/185, 75/196) have defined CAE as “serious crimes” in line with UNTOC standards
- UNEA has addressed wildlife crime through Resolutions 1/3 (2014) and 2/14 (2016)
- In 2024, the UN System Chief Executives Board committed to a UN-wide approach to tackle transnational organized crime, including environmental aspects

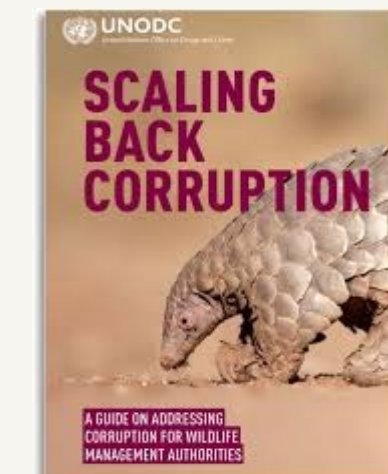
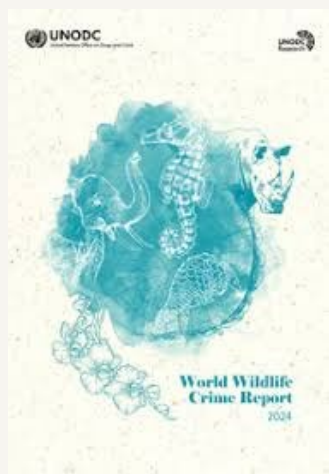
RELEVANCE TO UNEP's PROGRAMME OF WORK

- **2022–2025 MTS and PoW** – activities under the **Environmental governance subprogramme**.
 - Enhance **cooperation with MEAs**
 - **Strengthen national capacities** in environmental law and advancing the **2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development**
 - Promote **environmental rule of law**
- UNEA Resolution 4/20, the **Montevideo V Programme (2020–2029)** – second meeting of the national focal points identified environmental crime as a key area of focus.

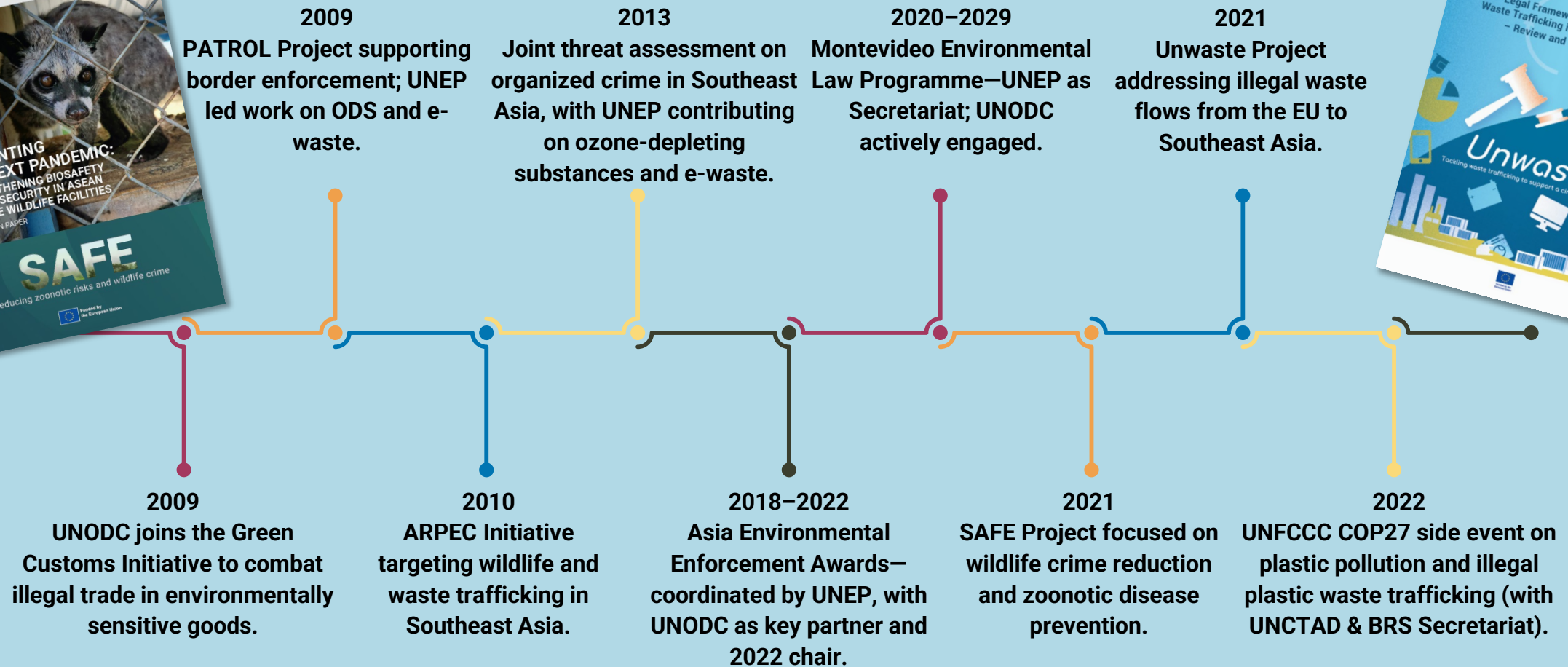
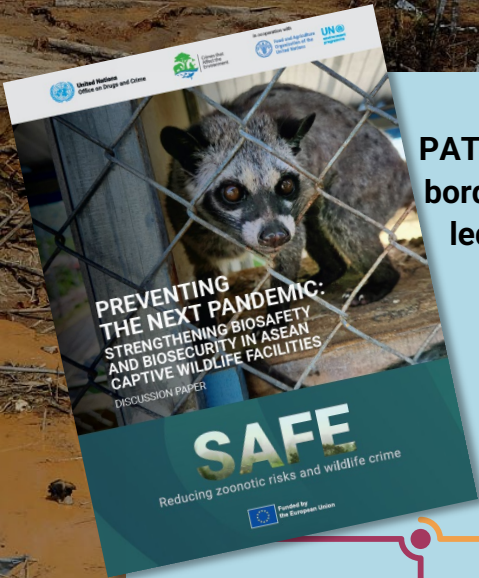




Activities and Cooperation – Research and Tools



UNODC AND UNEP JOINT EFFORTS



Unwaste

Tackling waste trafficking to support a circular economy

The Unwaste project has been at the forefront of tackling waste trafficking.



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CHALLENGES

The environment sector is highly vulnerable to criminal activities and the infiltration of organized criminal groups

There is currently no comprehensive international legal framework specifically designed to address CAE (CoE Convention not in force yet)

As a result, national legal frameworks remain fragmented

The international law enforcement response is impeded by constraints in capacity and effective cooperation mechanisms

Criminal activities severely undermine efforts to achieve the SDGs



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NEXT STEPS

Invest in continued efforts to raise awareness about ongoing activities.

Seek to mobilize funds for further research and capacity building.

Increase cooperation on legal and law enforcement assistance to Member States.

Engage with stakeholders and local communities in the monitoring and reporting of environmental offenses



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THANK YOU

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