

Ecomessage: Briefing Document

There is general agreement that environmental crime is one of the most profitable and fastest growing areas of international criminal activity. Criminal networks and syndicates, motivated by high profits and low risks, have established an international industry that:

1. Endangers the health and welfare of our communities and future generations,
2. Compromises the natural heritage and ecological integrity of the planet,
3. Unfairly disadvantages those companies complying with environmental laws, and
4. Flouts environmental law as well as many other laws.

It is important to keep in mind that environmental crime can be both localized, but also transnational. For example, an incident of illegal dumping of hazardous waste obviously concerns the location where the event occurred. Nevertheless, generators, transporters, agents, principals, and witnesses can be far from the scene, and frequently reside beyond national borders. In those cases, environmental crime is effectively countered only by good international cooperation.

Interpol, the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO) has been making efforts to suppress environmental crime since 1976. As part of this effort, Interpol in 1994 set up an Environmental Crimes Committee, which is comprised of a Working Group on Wildlife Crime, and a Working Group on Pollution Crime.

More than a quarter-century of experience has persuaded Interpol that the timely exchange of pertinent information is crucial to any campaigns that target international environmental crime. Interpol has also learned, however, that information exchange between various countries can suffer disruptive complications, because:

1. Required information often must be collected from widely scattered sources,
2. Countries do not have uniform reporting methods,
3. There had been no international repository for the collection, storage, analysis and circulation of information useful in efforts against environmental crime,
4. Investigators in one country often did not know which law enforcement agency or agencies were their appropriate contacts in other countries.

Interpol acted to resolve these shortcomings by creating Ecomessage.

With Ecomessage, Interpol seeks to create a reporting system and database that covers all major environmental crime, including:

1. Illegal transboundary movements and illegal dumping of wastes,
2. Illegal transboundary activities involving radioactive substances,
3. Illegal traffic in species of wild flora and fauna.