

MEDIA FACTSHEET – Newly established CITES Global Youth Network (CGYN)

Singapore is committed to the global fight against the illegal wildlife trade and adopts a multi-pronged strategy to combat illegal wildlife trade through research, education, legislation, and a whole-of-government enforcement approach.

Youths are a key target group for our efforts against illegal wildlife trade, as they will in time take on the mantle of wildlife conservation and help our planet move towards a more sustainable future. To this end, the National Parks Board of Singapore (NParks) has been actively engaging youths both globally and locally on wildlife conservation.

Newly established CITES Global Youth Network (CGYN)

To engage a broader community of youths on sustainable wildlife trade, Singaporean youths kickstarted the establishment of the very first Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Global Youth Network (CGYN), with support from NParks and the CITES Secretariat. The CGYN aims to provide a global platform for knowledge sharing and networking amongst youths, so as to equip them with the knowledge to better understand the intricacies of sustainable wildlife trade from an early stage. By providing leadership training and opportunities for international collaboration, CGYN paves the way for youth voices to not only be heard, but also contribute constructively to discussions surrounding wildlife trade. This is important, as youths will in time inform and influence wildlife conservation efforts in their various countries.

Forty-one youth leaders from 31 countries gathered in Singapore for the inaugural CITES Youth Leadership Programme from 22 to 25 April 2024 to be part of CGYN's founding members. The four-day lineup featured talks and discussions with global leaders such as CITES Secretary-General, Ms Ivonne Higuero, Senior International Advisor in New Zealand's Department of Conservation, Ms Sarah Bagnall, and European and Global Coordinator for the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, Mr Axel Eriksson. The programme included CGYN's first simulated CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP), where youth participants got the opportunity to learn about CITES procedures experientially through their participation in a

simulated CoP. The CITES Youth Leadership Programme was catalysed through partnerships with Mandai Nature, Temasek Foundation and other sponsors via the Garden City Fund, an NParks charity and registered Institution of a Public Character (IPC). Funds from the Government of Switzerland supported the participation of the youth delegates, made possible with the administrative support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malaysia.

Founding members of the CGYN will organise the inaugural Global Youth Summit in 2025 in Singapore, to continue engaging with youths around the world and develop their capacity in understanding CITES-related matters.

Engaging youths on wildlife conservation locally and regionally

Locally, our youths have been involved in wildlife conservation through avenues such as the Biodiversity Friends Forum (BFF), first initiated in 2017 to provide an avenue for individuals, especially youths, to be introduced to issues and implement action plans under the mentorship of members of the nature community. NParks also launched the Youth@SGNature initiative in 2020 to provide youths (15 to 25 years old) with more platforms to engage with nature and cultivate them to be stewards for biodiversity conservation and greenery. One such platform is the Youth Stewards for Nature (YSN) programme, which aims to nurture stewardship through mentorship and empowering youths to implement projects to solve real world problems in research, outreach, biodiversity conservation, or horticulture and landscape design. Examples of projects undertaken include promoting responsible interactions with wildlife and the organisation of the annual World Wildlife Day Regional Youth Symposium (WWD RYS) which started in 2022.

Led by youths, for youths, the annual Regional Youth Symposium aims to grow a community of youths passionate about conservation in the region, connect them to regional mentors and role models, and raise awareness of regional conservation efforts. In past iterations of WWD RYS, youths had the opportunity to learn from distinguished speakers and guests through a range of engaging programmes, including presentations, panel discussions, and workshops. All three editions of the event were supported by NParks as the CITES Management Authority of Singapore, in partnership with Mandai Nature and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.



[EMBARGOED UNTIL 6PM, 25 APRIL 2024]

In March 2023, a youth representative from the organising team of the WWDRYS presented the Regional Youth Symposium as a prime example of youth empowerment, capability, and partnerships at the global celebration of World Wildlife Day 2023 and CITES@50 in Washington DC.

Beyond outreach and education efforts on wildlife conservation, youths have also been involved locally in policymaking decisions which concern wildlife conservation. For example, in 2021, Singapore held consultations with youths to seek their input on legislative amendments to Singapore's Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act. Separately, a youth was also invited to join the Singapore delegation at the 19th Meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP) to CITES in November 2022.

Annex A – Countries represented at the CITES Youth Leadership Programme

Youth leaders from 31 countries gathered in Singapore from 22 to 25 April 2024 for the inaugural CITES Youth Leadership Programme to be part of CGYN's founding members. They were nominated by CITES Parties (i.e. Management Authorities, Scientific Authorities, and Enforcement Authorities) and observer organisations to represent their countries at the programme and within CGYN.

Australia	Laos
Austria	Malaysia
Bahrain	Morocco
Bolivia	Philippines
Burkina Faso	Rwanda
Cambodia	Singapore
Canada	South Africa
China	Sri Lanka
Costa Rica	Thailand
Cuba	Togo
Denmark	Tonga
Dominican Republic	Uganda
India	USA
Italy	Zambia
Japan	Zimbabwe
Kenya	

Annex B – Quotes on the CITES Youth Leadership Programme

“CITES is a powerful mechanism to ensure sustainability in the trade in wild animals and plants. We at NParks believe in scientifically informed decisions to strike a balance between conservation and sustainable use of wild species. We also recognise the importance of developing the capabilities of our youths to better understand decision-making processes in the Convention, in order to build up accountability and make meaningful contributions to CITES and other international policymaking processes. All (the youth leaders) here today have a chance to shape youth involvement in CITES and build valuable connections that could last a lifetime.”

—Ms Huang Yu-Ning, CEO, National Parks Board

“Temasek Foundation is privileged to be part of this important journey to encourage cross-border understanding and collaboration to empower youth sustainability leaders passionate about global conservation initiatives. We are delighted to see Singaporean youths stepping forward to lead international efforts towards a more sustainable wildlife trade.”

—Ng Boon Heong, Executive Director and CEO, Temasek Foundation

“Initiatives like CGYN and the CITES Youth Leadership Programme provide a platform for meaningful youth engagement in nature conservation. By investing in and empowering our youth as emerging leaders, we not only unlock their potential as key partners in driving impactful change on pressing issues like illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, but also build their capacity to lead. Witnessing them in action throughout this programme over the last few days in Singapore has been truly inspiring. Equipped with tools and opportunities to voice their perspectives, they can become catalysts for shaping policies that meet the needs of future generations.”

—Dr Jessica Lee, Assistant Vice President, Mandai Nature and Advisor to CGYN



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Annex C – Singapore’s approach to combatting illegal wildlife trade

Illegal wildlife trade threatens the survival of endangered species, contributes to habitat destruction and harms biodiversity around the world. While Singapore is not a significant destination nor source of such illegal trade, we want to play a critical role to deter the illegal trade in wildlife. Hence, Singapore adopts a zero-tolerance stance on the illegal trade of endangered wildlife species, and their parts and derivatives. We are committed to the global fight against the illegal wildlife trade and adopt a multi-pronged approach to regulate and enforce against such trade. This approach is anchored by a robust legal and effective enforcement framework across the Government.

NParks partners key stakeholders and works with members of the community to raise awareness on the role they can play in tackling illegal wildlife trade. In addition to our youth engagement efforts, we regularly engage industry stakeholders, such as the maritime industry, e-commerce companies, and financial institutions, and reach out to the wider public through outreach and education programmes like webinars and exhibitions.

International recognition of Singapore’s efforts

Our efforts to tackle illegal wildlife trade have been recognised internationally. In both 2019 and 2021, NParks received the United Nations Asia Environmental Enforcement Award together with our partners, ICA, Singapore Customs and Chinese authorities. This was for the seizure of a record haul of 37.5 tonnes of pangolin scales and 8.8 tonnes of elephant ivory, and the successful controlled delivery operation of a large ivory ornament respectively. Singapore was also appointed as a Board member to the INTERPOL Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG) to guide and contribute to WCWG’s activities, including planning for global operations to strengthen responses in tackling illegal wildlife trade.

The Centre for Wildlife Forensics was also recognised as a CITES Reference Laboratory in June 2022. This recognition is a testament to Singapore’s capabilities in wildlife forensic science, in supporting the implementation and enforcement of CITES. It also attests to the high standards of the Centre in conforming to ISO quality assurance standards for wildlife forensic testing.