

A public comment on a draft report, titled “Inspection results on the implementation status of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan”

Japanese Wildlife Conservation Society (JWCS) has submitted a public comment on a draft report, titled “Inspection results on the implementation status of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan” called for by Japan’s Ministry of the Environment (MOE) from November 27 to December 27, 2020.

The draft report has three chapters:

Chapter 1. Inspection result about efforts along the basic strategies,

Chapter 2. Roadmap for the Achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets,

Chapter 3. Inspection result about the action plan on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

In chapter 1, a summary of the measures, and challenges towards the next national strategy are provided. Then the next chapter shows assessments on the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of which achievement-year was 2020. Not only administration activities but also efforts in enterprises and citizens are included in the index. Detailed assessments on the 916 measures are presented in chapter 3.

JWCS has given the following comment on the 516th measure regard to controlling the trade of rare wild species.

December 22, 2020.

A public comment on a draft report, titled “Inspection results on the implementation status of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan”

Japanese Wildlife Conservation Society (JWCS)

[Corresponding part]

Measure number 516, p.67

Measure:

In terms of controlling the trade of rare wild species, the government will continue to work on the prevention and exposure of illegal acts, consider and implement effective domestic distribution controls, through coordination and collaboration between the relevant ministries, agencies, and other organizations (MOE and other relevant government offices and ministries).

Assessment:

“a+ already achieved”

Current status and outcomes of the measure:

The government has implemented domestic distribution controls including education to operators, through coordination and collaboration between the relevant ministries, agencies, and other organizations.

Budget:

Expenditure for domestic distribution controls of international rare wild species

[Our comment to the part]

Although it was assessed as “a+ already achieved”, more efforts are still needed in terms of strengthening international coordination and law enforcement through education about wildlife crime to Police and Customs.

[Reasons]

The number of offenders prosecuted was six out of 232 (262 were not prosecuted) against Act on Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in 2019 (statistics from the Public Prosecutors Office). There were nine indictment cases found in data from information disclosure requested by JWCS*. The investigations of the seven were made because they were accused as illicit exhibitions in an internet auction. The remaining two cases were arrests on illicit ivory trades, through the internet and auction made by Gifu prefectural police and Osaka prefectural police. For these, we can hardly say the government actively exposes an offender.

On top of that, the number of CITES trade suspension of importation at Customs was 351, however, the number of cases either indicted or given notification disposition against the Custom Act was only six in 2019 (Ministry of Finance).

The numbers of wildlife illegal transports indicted at airport were compared among countries in “In Plane Sight” (a report by a core group of partners collaborating with the U.S. Government and the transport sector that includes the Center for Advanced Defense Studies, Freeland, the International Air Transport Association, TRAFFIC, and WWF). According to this report, the number of cases seized in Japan was much less than the number of illegal transports that Japan did not seize (i.e., missed) but seized in other countries. Taking account of the number of cases seized before arrival, there seems to be a certain number of illegal trades involving Japan. Thus, Japan has a large responsibility for the prevention of international illegal trade (Figure 8, p.25).

Moreover, the percentage of seizures in Japan was 23%, divided by the number of successfully attempted trafficking instances (as the number of times illegal wildlife products were successfully imported into a country, regardless of whether they were seized in that country’s airports or later on in the supply chain). In comparison with UK92%, US85%, and Malawi 82%, the percentage of Japan is considered extremely

low. In other words, Japan does not effectively seize illegal wildlife trades through its airports. The report points out that:

“Japan, a destination country with high-quality infrastructure, has a low Country Enforcement Indicator at around 23%. This may be caused by fairly lax legislation concerning the wildlife trade, little enforcement attention to existing regulations, lack of media coverage, or lack of public interest in the wildlife trafficking issue.”

For these reasons, it is considered that the assessment (i.e., “a+ already achieved”) is overestimated and that enforcement should be strengthened, as other countries have done.

*arrests of a seller and a buyer are combined.

税関におけるワシントン条約該当物品の輸入差止等の件数と主な品目. Ministry of Finance.
(in Japanese)

https://www.customs.go.jp/mizugiwa/washington/washington_sashitome.pdf

罪名別被疑事件の既済および未済の人員 19-00-08. Statistics from the Public Prosecutors Office. (In Japanese)

In Plane Sight: Wildlife Trafficking in the Air Transport Sector (2018). ROUTES Partnership and C4ADS. p25, p.30-31.

<https://routespartnership.org/industry-resources/publications/in-plane-sight>

Figure 8. Point of seizure within the supply chain by country (2009-2017)

Figure 12. Country Enforcement Index for countries with twenty-five or more trafficking instances (2009-2017)