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THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN

Using Bilateral Diplomacy to Spearhead Global Conversation Efforts

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For the United States, a healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. While humans cannot flourish without access to natural resources, a strong, market-driven economy remains paramount to protecting and conserving these resources for our own benefit and that of generations to come. This past April, on the 48th annual Earth Day (widely viewed as the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement), the White House issued a statement by President Trump highlighting the United States' commitment to furthering "this rich legacy of conservation" and cherishing "our magnificent land and waterways, abundant natural resources, and unique wildlife." At the same time, the United States considers it of utmost importance that economic progress continue "in concert with –not in opposition to– protecting the environment." The United States remains collectively committed to mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through increased innovation on sustainable energy and energy efficiency, and working toward low greenhouse gas emission energy systems. America has a good story to tell on how to grow the economy while safeguarding the world's natural heritage and the global network of U.S. diplomats are the protagonists in this story.

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Protecting Where We Live through Science, Innovation, and Partnership

The U.S. Congress created the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs within the State Department in 1974 to cover issues that reach from the vastness of space to the depths of the oceans. Later renamed the Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science, or OES, the Bureau, via U.S. diplomats worldwide, advances U.S. strategic interests through policy aimed at ensuring that economic growth and a healthy planet go hand in hand. By working on issues that impact millions of U.S. jobs and advance U.S. foreign policy and national security interests, OES builds international consensus around issues like fighting infectious diseases, combatting wildlife trafficking and illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, and curbing illegal logging and associated trade. OES also promotes water security, peaceful cooperation on polar issues, sustainable ocean and fisheries policy, science and technology cooperation, nature conservation, and climate and space policy, among other vital topics.

¹ White House Statement and Releases, "Presidential Message on Earth Day, 2018," April 22, 2018

Positioned at the center of the global conversation, OES serves at the forefront of U.S. diplomatic efforts to confront some of world's greatest environmental challenges. From protecting the American public's health at home and abroad, and combatting wildlife crimes, OES works to advance policies that ensure liberty, security and prosperity not just for Americans, but in countries such as Spain, where the United States shares a strong bilateral relationship on issues involving the environment, energy security, and natural resource protection.

OES engagement continues to provide valuable opportunities for the United States to deepen and expand ties with friends and allies, while building relationships with emerging economies as well as countries with whom the broader bilateral relationship may be difficult. In Spain, OES has a long and successful history of advancing our nations' mutual interests in the environment, and aligning these policies with those of Spain, to ensure that both Spanish and American companies benefit from international opportunities in these sectors. The vast range of issues that fall within the OES mandate touch American and Spanish communities, and affect small to large businesses across numerous sectors. Challenges such as pollution and habitat destruction, overfishing, and illegal trade of wildlife hinder economic development, undermine the rule of law, and increase risks of natural disasters and civil conflict. The United States and Spain have increased bilateral cooperation and addressed global environmental challenges on a number of fronts, including, but not limited to, the long-term sustainability of fisheries, threats posed by poaching and wildlife trafficking, forest conservation, and challenges in the arctic.

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for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. However, the EU and Spain have implemented measures to combat this growing concern in the past several years, by passing stricter penalties and stepping up enforcement on companies and individuals involved in IUU fishing. This work has made an impact such that Spain is now held up as a model for how to combat IUU fishing. There is also great concern about the growth of criminal activities including human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, corruption and tax fraud that are carried out by individuals working within the fishing industry. These crimes are frequently linked to vessels that carry out illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing. IUU undermines governments' capacity to enforce policy, promote food security, reduce poverty, fund public expenditure, and support development activities².

No single authority has a comprehensive or transnational mandate to oversee and combat the full spectrum of activities associated with fisheries related crimes. Fighting these crimes therefore requires strong cooperation, between police, prosecutors and fisheries managers within a country and across countries to tackle the increasing transnational nature of such crimes. Since IUU fishing is an issue of mutual concern to both the United States and Spain, Embassy Madrid co-sponsored *Fishhackathon 2018*, an initiative aimed at curtailing IUU and creating sustainable solutions for fishery resources. Embassy Madrid combined forces with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the University of Cádiz International Campus of Excellence of the Sea (CEI-MAR), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Spanish Institute of Oceanography to launch Spain's first edition of #Fishhackathon in the Atlantic port city of Cádiz. A global initiative in 52 cities worldwide, the Cadiz event brought together 45 participants from across Spain, divided into nine teams, to devise solutions to real-world challenges facing sustainable fishing. Teams were presented eleven different challenge sets covering diverse

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IUU Fishing, the Arctic, and Wildlife Trafficking: Using Diplomacy and Tech to Drive Policy Discussions

The Office of Marine Conservation (OMC) is the section of OES responsible for formulating and implementing U.S. policy on a broad range of international issues concerning the conservation and management of living marine resources. Fisheries and aquaculture supply protein and healthy nutrition to billions of people, generate about 260 million jobs around the world and are the world's most traded food commodity. Owing to its geographical location, Spain was once one of the largest seaports

² Conference: Combating Tax Crime and Other Crimes in the Fisheries Sector, 13-14 October 2016, OECD, Paris.



An endangered species and the most trafficked animal worldwide, Pangolin is considered a culinary delicacy and their scales are used in traditional medicine throughout China and Southeast Asia. / Foto: Pexels, Zoey Sung

areas including *Small-Scale Fisher Registration; Detection and Risk Assessment of IUU; Fishing, Aquaculture and Fish Feed Impact; Technical Assistance to Aid Sustainability Practices; Development of an Easy-Access Regulations Database; and Freshwater Monitoring and Communication*. The event, which garnered media coverage in regional and industry publications, placed Cádiz on the world stage in sustainable aquaculture and fishing, and strengthened Embassy Madrid's relationship with the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

In order to manage, conserve and restore stocks of living marine resources, the OES's guiding principles are to first, maintain a healthy and productive marine environment and marine ecosystems and second, promote economic benefits and food security through sustainable fisheries. This October, the United States and the European Union (of which Spain is a member state) signed the *Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean*. The unique and historic multilateral agreement represents a collaborative and precautionary approach by ten parties to manage high seas fish stocks in the Central Arctic Ocean. Ice has traditionally covered the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean year-round. Recently, the melting of Arctic ice has left large areas of the high seas uncovered for much of the year. As a result, commercial

fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean may become viable in areas where fisheries activity was previously not possible. Prior to this agreement, no legally binding international agreement existed to manage potential fishing in the high seas of the region. Additionally, the effort marks the first time an international agreement of this magnitude has been proactively reached before any commercial fishing has taken place in a high seas area.

Wildlife trafficking, the illegal poaching, transit, trade and sale of wildlife generates more than \$10 billion a year for transnational organized criminal networks. Trafficking remains a serious transnational crime and has devastating impacts upon security, economic prosperity, the rule of law, long-standing conservation efforts, and human health. This is an issue that has pushed species to the brink of extinction, contributes to the spread of disease and robs local communities of their natural resource base, including the economic benefits they derive from the legal sale of wildlife and hunting revenues. Each year, 1.5 million live birds and 440,000 tons of medicinal plants are illegally trafficked, and over 100 tigers, 1,000 rhinoceroses, 30,000 elephants and some 100,000 pangolins succumb to wildlife trafficking and poaching. If the current trend continues, coming generations will witness the full disappearance of these species. The consequences of wildlife trafficking

*SEPRONA (Service of
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transcend conservation issues: Wildlife trafficking is a transnational security threat and thus requires a transnational solution, calling for strategic cooperation at global, regional, national and local levels.

In this context, since the United States is one of the world's major markets for both legal and illegal wildlife and wildlife products, the U.S. government has an important role to play in addressing wildlife trafficking. OES coordinates international efforts to strengthen global enforcement, reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products, and expand international commitment across a range of multilateral, regional and bilateral forums. Through an Executive Order and Presidential Task Force, the White House has made strong moves towards strengthening worldwide enforcement in wildlife trafficking. President Trump, in Executive Order 13773, called for a comprehensive and decisive approach to dismantle organized crime syndicates, highlighting wildlife trafficking as one of four priority areas in the effort to dismantle transnational organized criminal networks. The U. S. government's three-pronged approach to combating wildlife trafficking –strengthening law enforcement, reducing demand, and building international cooperation–deprives criminals of a key source of financing and reduces the criminal threat posed to U.S. citizens. The Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking is making a difference on the ground at home and worldwide, coordinating U.S. government activities in this space, identifying and eliminating inefficiencies, and strategically allocating resources, and expanding international outreach. By working in partnership with the private sector, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGO), the United States has led the way globally, securing agreements and commitments from governments and stakeholders at all levels to take urgent action. As co-chair of the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, OES coordinates

the State Department's work to implement the END (Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt) Wildlife Trafficking Act, signed into law in October 2016.

Spain has become a global paragon in the fight against environmental bad actors, enjoying close cooperation with the United States in sharing information to combat wildlife trafficking. Illegal wildlife trafficking has become a growing concern in Spain as the sales of ivory and the trade of rare species increases throughout the world. As a consequence of its geography, Spain acts as a major transit point for wildlife trafficking from Africa and Latin America into Europe because of its geographical proximity to Africa and close ties with Latin America, placing Spain at the center of the global fight against wildlife trafficking. The EU and Spain have implemented measures to combat this growing concern in the past several years, such as improving compliance with CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and conducting ongoing law enforcement operations to counter traffickers. Depending on the species, fatality rates during illegal transport can reach up to 80 percent. Animals that are seized alive in Spain are moved to a CITES recovery center in Casarrubios del Monte, Toledo. In 2015, the compound housed 421 animals representing 47 different species. The animals that are unable to be reintegrated into the wild are used for behavioral research and endangered species breeding.

SEPRONA (Service of Protection of the Nature), a Civil Guard unit which is integrated with the Spanish Customs Agency and represented in 376 locations throughout Spain, could provide a model for other countries seeking to effectively combat environmental crimes. SEPRONA officials report that the majority of animal trafficking and IUU fishing in Spain is motivated by economic factors, and is not linked to large organized crime or terrorism networks. Currently, Spain is the only country in the world to have a section of the national police force dedicated to nature protection, and the only with multiple locations throughout the country. Countries such as Romania, Italy, and Portugal have followed Spain's lead to implement this type of enforcement in their countries. To combat wildlife trafficking, Spain became the first EU Country to implement its own framework plan to combat wildlife trafficking and related poaching. In February 2018, the Government of Spain adopted "The Spanish Action Plan against Illegal Trade and Poaching at the Intentional Level" (known as TIFIES). Recently, SEPRONA and the Spanish government have collaborated closely with the United States and international organizations to develop effective public outreach campaigns to educate the public about wildlife crimes.



An owl at the CITIES rescue center in Toledo, Spain.

In September 2018, Embassy Madrid, in Partnership with the Madrid Zoo Aquarium, the Spanish Ministry for Ecologic Transition, SEPRONA, and the United Parks Foundation, conducted the first-ever Zoohackathon at the Madrid Zoo Aquarium. The event brought together 54 programmers, designers, and wildlife enthusiasts divided into 11 teams for a weekend, to devise solutions to the challenges of wildlife trafficking. At Zoohackathon, the participants had two days to create high tech solutions to resolve real-world challenge related to the poaching and sale of endangered species. The participants were presented with four challenge sets: *Demystifying Laws Around Wildlife Trafficking*; *Communication Tools for Wildlife*; *Wildlife Trafficking on Social Media*; and *Identifying and Tracking Animals in Captivity*.

The first prize, sponsored by cybersecurity firm Tarlogic went to a team of engineering students from Malaga for their database chip and app project called Hippo-chip. Based on blockchain technology, Hippo-chip proposes an international database to track details of every animal bred in captivity or at farms for commercial purposes. Each animal would be marked with an electronic identification chip containing data on that animal's unique DNA sequences, eye characteristics, fur coloration and spot patterns. Via the Hippo-chip app, customs agents could scan animals and verify whether they are part of an illegal trafficking scheme. Second prize went to a team from Barcelona for its online platform called Poach the Poachers, which automates searches in social networks for advertisements for the illegal purchase and sale of species. The tool would aid authorities detecting criminals involved in the digital wildlife tracking business.

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The United States and Spain: Environmental Cooperation on a Sustainable Basis

Spanish and U.S. environmental collaboration, however, has not been limited to hackathons, and the United States continues to engage in high-level bilateral engagement between U.S. diplomats and top Spanish government officials. Environmental concerns are central to the energy policy of the new Spanish government. Spain has carved out its space as a global leader in renewable energy, and continues to operate on a large-scale in the United States. In the past year, Embassy Madrid brought two experts from U.S. National Parks Service to consult with Parques Nacionales on park management and wildfires. American Fish and Wildlife Service experts regularly conduct training programs alongside Spanish counterparts in the enforcement of regulations under CITES. In 2019, Embassy Madrid will continue its work with the Spanish Ministry for Ecologic Transition and SEPRONA to see how both our countries can better share information in order to beef up enforcement. The United States continues to care deeply about the environment, climate change, and other areas within the Environment, Science, Technology and Health orbit. Pioneering programs, outreach campaigns, and engagement with local audiences throughout Spain serve as a testimony to strong American environmental stewardship. The United States remains engaged with global interlocutors and committed to making our world cleaner, safer, and sustainable.