

THE MARRAKECH DECLARATION

A 10-POINT ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT ILLICIT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Today in Marrakech, we are launching a new coordinated response to combat illicit wildlife trafficking. This initiative builds on and complements other actions taken through initiatives such as the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) and regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs).¹ It provides an Africa-wide platform to support new as well as existing initiatives.

ILLICIT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

Wildlife trafficking is now more organised, more lucrative, more widespread and more dangerous than ever before. Poachers with military weapons and vehicles gun down elephants and rhinos. Increasingly, they are also targeting the park rangers dedicated to protecting threatened species.

The result is a scourge that is wiping out elephants and rhinos, along with other African species. Tens of thousands of elephants across Africa are poached each year. The forest elephant population in the Congo Basin has fallen by more than 60 percent in the last decade. In one African country, rhino poaching has increased by 5,000 per cent since 2007. Illicit wildlife trafficking also greatly threatens many other African species both plant and animal, and several populations of these species are also plummeting.

What's more, it is no longer a local phenomenon. International criminal networks run the trade and some use the profits to buy weapons, to finance civil conflicts and to pay for terrorism.

UNDERMINING THE BASIS OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

This is not just an environmental problem. The violence and damage now threatens peace and the rule of law, as well as the revenue many African countries earn from tourism and other wildlife uses; some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities that depend on wildlife for their livelihoods suffer. Illicit wildlife trafficking also involves species that are subject to considerable legal trade, trades which when sustainable and traceable provide critical benefits to local communities.

Wildlife trafficking thwarts governments' efforts to stop other illicit trades, such as arms and drugs. It fuels organ-ised crime and corruption, and compromises regional security.

Put simply, illicit wildlife trafficking is undermining the basis of Africa's development and reversing some of the hard-earned economic and social achievements the continent has made in recent years.

DEMAND FOR ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS

Growing demand for illegal wildlife products drives the surge in illicit wildlife trafficking. The tusks, bones and horns of animals killed in Africa, appear in markets all over the world. Smuggled goods find their way to Asia, North America, Europe and elsewhere. Increased demand has led to skyrocketing prices for illegal animal goods. Worth around \$8 to 10 billion a year, illicit wildlife trafficking now ranks alongside arms, drugs and human trafficking as one of the most highly profitable transnational organised crimes in the world. And it is growing fast.

¹ ICWC is collaboration of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Bank and the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Fauna (CITES). There are regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) operating within Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America.

WE NEED TO ACT NOW

We need strong partnerships to fight the global problem of illicit wildlife trafficking. This is why we are launching today a new, concerted response.

I Building collaboration to combat illicit wildlife trafficking

Wildlife is a precious global resource that we need to protect and preserve. We reassert the common and irreplaceable value of threatened species to our world and we urge countries and their citizens to act urgently to fight illicit wildlife trafficking in Africa and across the globe.

To help build an effective collaboration on wildlife protection in Africa we stress the need to:

- Action 1** Initiate or join bilateral, regional and/or international cooperation agreements to combat illicit wildlife trafficking, particularly between countries which share wildlife trafficking trade routes.
- Action 2** Deepen and operationalise collaboration with international institutions dealing with illicit wildlife trafficking, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Interpol, the World Customs Organisation, the World Bank, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.
- Action 3** Promote the notion within and beyond our countries that illicit wildlife trafficking is a serious crime, with significant implications beyond species conservation for national security, rule of law, and other forms of serious organised crime.

I Strengthening law enforcement

Trafficking relies on porous borders, the complicity of officials and strong networks of organised crime, all of which undermine our mutual security. We recognise the threat posed by illicit wildlife trafficking to sovereign nations and to the wellbeing of our populations. We will therefore treat this crime equally and in coordination with efforts to halt other forms of illicit trafficking, corruption and money laundering. To help combat wildlife trafficking in Africa we stress the need to:

- Action 4** Increase financial and human resources for and the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement, trade controls and monitoring to address this problem at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- Action 5** Establish specialised CITES Units within customs to provide expertise and resources, particularly for specimen identification, and bolster the ability of customs to detect and seize illicit wildlife products by increasing the amount of training, resourcing, and the individual time allocation that each customs official has for detection of illicit wildlife products.
- Action 6** Promote the establishment of and actively participate in a National Environmental Security Task Force (NEST) or similar multi-agency cooperative as recommended by Interpol. Such a task force would include police, customs, environmental agencies, other specialised agencies, prosecutors, non-governmental organisations and intergovernmental partners.

I Penalising wildlife crime to the full extent of the law

To help curb illicit wildlife trafficking we need to ensure that wildlife criminals are penalised to the full extent of the law, providing an effective deterrent to ongoing criminal involvement. To this end, we stress the need to:

- Action 7** Strengthen the judiciary sector with better awareness, capacity and resources to ensure that prosecutions for illicit wildlife trafficking are conducted effectively, to the full extent of the law and using the strongest penalties available.

- Action 8** When necessary, change or update legislation to ensure that illicit wildlife trafficking of protected species is a criminal offense punishable by at least four years of prison, as recommended by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, so that the UN Convention on Transnational Organised Crime can be used as a basis for international cooperation and mutual legal assistance.
- Action 9** Ensure that suspects apprehended for wildlife trafficking are treated as serious criminals, including investigation of the suspect with respect to other non-wildlife related offenses, and potential seizure of assets of arrested suspects.
- Action 10** Publicise illicit wildlife trafficking as a serious crime under national law, notably showcasing successful prosecutions that resulted in significant penalties.

I Reducing demand for illicit wildlife products

In the long term, illicit wildlife trafficking can only be effectively tackled if we reduce the demand for illicit wildlife products. Therefore, we stress the need for government-led, well-researched campaigns aimed at reducing demand, using targeted strategies to influence consumer behaviour.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS OURS

We can stop illicit wildlife trafficking and we can act together to protect threatened species. Illicit wildlife trade transcends national borders and it is only by acting in concert that we will defeat it.

It is in our local, national, regional and global interests to act now. Failure to do so will have consequences that extend far beyond environmental concerns — it will exacerbate insecurity and conflict, undermine development, and threaten livelihoods of some of the most vulnerable populations in Africa.

As signatories to this initiative we do not accept these consequences, which is why we make this pledge today.

ILLICIT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING IS A SERIOUS CRIME It's your turn to take action!

Your life and those you care for are affected by illicit wildlife trafficking, a serious crime that threatens our security, political stability and economic development. World leaders at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 recognised the economic, social and environmental impacts of illicit wildlife trafficking. They called for firm and strengthened action on both supply and demand.

I pledge to join the fight against illicit wildlife trafficking by writing an email to combatiwt@afdb.org (Please include your name, organisation and country).

