



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 3, 2016

Contact: [Jim Specht](#) (202) 225-5071

**CONGRESSWOMAN KAY GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: STATE AND
FOREIGN OPERATIONS APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING
ON ASSISTANCE TO COMBAT WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING**

This hearing will address an issue I have followed closely for several years – international wildlife trafficking. This is a crisis and we must address it in an urgent manner. We cannot afford to do business as usual.

Not only are unique species at risk, but the continued surge in wildlife trafficking threatens international security and stability.

The numbers are staggering. Over 120,000 African elephants were killed between 2010 and 2013. The current population is estimated at 400,000 to 600,000, down from 1.2 million in 1980.

In South Africa, a record 1,215 rhinoceros were poached in 2014. Just seven years earlier, that number was 13. Last week, South Africa released numbers for 2015 that showed a small decrease for the first time since 2007, but we know that rhino poaching has increased substantially in neighboring countries.

These are just two examples, but there are many other species that are suffering the same fate.

There is also a human toll. We know that hundreds of park rangers have been killed by poachers and just earlier this week there were news reports of a conservationist being shot while working to protect wildlife in Tanzania.

Extremely sophisticated criminal networks, some with links to terrorists, are profiting from poaching. The illegal trade in wildlife is estimated at \$8 to \$10 billion annually.

We cannot afford to sit and think about what to do. We must act.

- over -

From fiscal year 2014 through fiscal year 2016, this Subcommittee appropriated \$180 million for wildlife trafficking. We want to hear about how this funding is being used to combat poaching and trafficking of wildlife, as well as to reduce demand for illegal wildlife products.

There is a greater awareness of the problem today, but there is still so much work that must be done. The President issued an executive order in 2013, and we have a national strategy in place. There is a lot of talk about plans, but the Subcommittee needs to hear about actions.

A common complaint is that there is very little information publicly available on what the U.S. Government is doing to address the crisis.

The Subcommittee needs an update on how much of the funding has been spent, what has been achieved so far, how you evaluate programs, and what you plan to focus on going forward that will turn the tide and help bring an end to the illegal killing of these animals.

Corruption is one of the main challenges we face in countries where wildlife trafficking is most prevalent. The funding we provide around the world must address this issue.

It is going to take a serious and sustained effort across the U.S. Government to make a real difference, and I hope you will be able to share with the Subcommittee how the department of state and U.S.A.I.D. are doing just that.

###