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**House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs**

“Oversight Hearing – Assistance to Combat Wildlife Trafficking”

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Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the progress that the U.S. government and our partners are making to combat wildlife trafficking.

The alarming levels of poaching and trafficking of endangered wildlife, such as elephants, rhinos, pangolins, and other iconic species close to extinction is a man-made calamity that is within our power to stop. In South Africa last year, poachers slaughtered 878 rhinos within the South African National Parks area alone. That means just one park system, in one country, in one year, lost rhinos at a rate of more than two per day. As global population of rhinos is only 30,000, such levels of poaching puts rhinos on a path towards extinction within our own lifetimes. Similarly, elephants continue to be poached at unsustainable levels – more than 30,000 per year by some estimates. Make no mistake: we are not talking about local profiteers making small change by killing a rhino. Individual hunters do not transport tons—literally, tons—of ivory across continents, spanning oceans, by themselves. It takes well-armed, well-equipped, and well-organized criminal networks to traffic illegal wildlife parts across the global supply chain – from the killing fields to demand markets, with the help of a web of corrupt and criminal facilitators.

These same networks, or similar ones, use many of the techniques and routes also used to traffic drugs, weapons, and people, which are the only items that are more frequently trafficked than wildlife. These are organized, efficient, often violent and well-funded networks. They are responsible for fueling not only the depletion of natural resources, but also undermining the rule of law, causing permanent harm to communities, local economies, and to the environment, fomenting instability, and providing a significant source of funds used by violent cartels, gangs, and even terrorists.

While these are not new challenges, we must have a shared sense of urgency on the part of governments, both those responsible for the preservation of endangered species where they live, as well as among consumer countries. As the global, commercial, and technological infrastructure that allows transnational criminal organizations to earn record profits from trafficking ivory and other illegal wildlife products has grown, so too have our tools to combat these organizations including our ability to detect, and the willingness to prosecute the perpetrators of wildlife crimes.

The Department of State is proud to be one of the co-chairs of the Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking which reinforces our whole-of-government response. As outlined in the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking, which the President released in February 2014, along with the Implementation Plan, which the Task Force released in February 2015, we are strengthening enforcement, here and abroad, reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife, and building international cooperation.

Year 2015 may well be seen as a watershed year in the fight against wildlife trafficking, though our results are just first steps on the way towards solving this challenge. On July 25, President Obama announced proposed wide-ranging restrictions on the domestic trade in African elephant ivory. Building on that momentum, President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed on September 25 to enact nearly complete bans on ivory import and export, and to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade in ivory.

Reflecting international concern regarding the scourge of wildlife trafficking, the United Nations General Assembly passed its first resolution on wildlife trafficking in 2015. It also adopted new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call on members to take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species, to address both the demand and supply of illegal wildlife products, and to enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), which I have the honor to lead, has extensive experience combating all forms of transnational crime. Decades spent combating drug trafficking in our hemisphere and beyond has taught us invaluable lessons that we have adapted to address new and emerging forms of crime like wildlife trafficking. This includes helping our partners stop crime at the source, whether this means a poppy field or a wildlife reserve. We work with law enforcement partners worldwide to interdict the transit of shipments on roads, at borders, and at ports of entry. We strive to “follow the money” and target illicit finance and other facilitators that traffic in illicit products and activities. We and our colleagues in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs engage with our international partners and through multilateral institutions to reduce demand and deprive criminal networks of the economic incentive to traffic illicit goods in the first place. INL is also focused on reforms to justice systems so that traffickers of illicit goods, such as wildlife, are deterred or prosecuted and punished. This experience, and our

success in these areas, makes INL a natural home for an expanded role in fighting the scourge of wildlife trafficking. INL has benefitted from the generously heightened support this Subcommittee has championed, including the more than \$50 million appropriated for INL wildlife programming over the last four years.

This support is extraordinarily important. In many ways, trafficking is trafficking no matter what, or whom, is being trafficked. INL, along with our partners from the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and other government interlocutors, are applying effective strategies to disrupt the poaching and trafficking of wildlife at this critical time and to combat the corruption that facilitates them. Guided by the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking and its Implementation Plan, INL has developed programs under four key pillars:

First, we work with our partners to strengthen their legislative frameworks. It may be hard to believe, but in some countries, trafficking in wildlife has never been a crime. Starting at the most basic level, we help countries develop laws consistent with international standards that are in the best interest of wildlife, local communities, and both global and American priorities. We can't move forward with catching or prosecuting these criminal networks if there isn't even a crime on the books.

Second, we work with our partners to build capacity to investigate and to enforce both their laws and the relevant international agreements. This follow through is critical. For example, in Kenya, INL worked with NGOs to orient 112 investigators, prosecutors, and judges with Kenya's newly revised wildlife legislation. Last year, INL funded over 50 wildlife enforcement training sessions for more than 1,000 officials benefitting nearly 30 countries. Several trainings were conducted by the best wildlife law enforcement agency in the world: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which, in addition to crushing the U.S. ivory stockpile in 2013 and 2015, has also trained more than 500 law enforcement officers from across Africa and Asia at our International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs) in Thailand and Botswana. We are excited to expand this partnership by offering wildlife investigative training at all of our ILEAs this year.

The third pillar of INL's engagement is enhancing prosecutorial and judicial capacity of prosecutors and judicial systems to convict and punish those guilty of wildlife trafficking. Investigations and law enforcement actions by themselves are not enough to stop traffickers: they must also be effectively prosecuted and

punished to reinforce the rule of law and help to deter others. INL works holistically, with partners in countries that are home to endangered species, those through which they are transported or processed, and in consumer countries, to ensure that justice is done. INL has partnered with expert wildlife prosecutors at the Department of Justice for some of this training in Africa and last year, INL funded the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to train the 90 prosecutors in Laos whose jurisdiction includes this crime on wildlife trafficking and anti-money laundering.

Finally, the fourth pillar of our strategy aims to facilitate cross-border regional cooperation. Wildlife roam across national borders. So do wildlife traffickers. INL is working with non-governmental organizations as well as international organizations such as INTERPOL, UNODC, and the World Customs Organization to implement our programs and to set regional and global standards of conduct. For example, in 2015, with INL support, INTERPOL provided analytical investigative support and intelligence exchange assistance to law enforcement officials and prosecutors from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, who then carried out *Operation Worthy II*. This coordinated law enforcement operation led to the arrest of 376 criminals, the seizure of 4.4 tons of ivory and rhino horn, and the disbanding of major wildlife trafficking networks.

Since I last testified before you two years ago, we have finally seen widespread recognition across the global community that wildlife trafficking is a problem that must be addressed head on and with urgency. This was not always the case: many countries, particularly those who either had responsibility for the endangered species themselves, or who were the consumers of products such as ivory and horn, were reluctant to take action and expend resources. We have also seen some successes to date: an uptick in arrests, an increase in major ivory seizures, and a decline in the price of elephant ivory.

In the past year, the Department of State has worked with great resolve with our partners in the Association of South East Asian Nations to adopt wildlife trafficking as a preeminent transnational crime focus area. As a result of the State Department's efforts, the ministers at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime in September agreed to include trafficking in wildlife and timber within their purview. This is a significant and positive step, which places trafficking in wildlife and timber alongside other crimes and security-related issues.

At the 2015 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Department of State worked with our Asian and Latin American partners to secure wildlife trafficking commitments from the member states. Consequently, APEC members undertook to combat wildlife trafficking by further reducing illegal supply, transit, and demand, and enhancing legal frameworks and law enforcement. We are partnering with China and other economies across Asia to combat corruption and illicit trade, including as related to environmental crimes. We also engage China bilaterally through the Strategic and Economic Dialogue and the Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation.

Our voice is being heard in these fora that bring key countries together for action. The G-7 approved a roadmap last year aimed at combating wildlife trafficking on the internet, recognizing that transnational crime and cybercrime are increasingly linked. The G7 Leaders Declaration committed our countries to combating wildlife trafficking, noting that in some instances it is being used to finance organized crime, insurgencies, and terrorism. In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, with U.S. support, a resolution treat wildlife trafficking as a serious crime, which unlocks tools for law enforcement cooperation across borders.

Yet this is not enough. Endangered species, from the great mammals – tigers, whales, and rhinos – to the smallest creatures and the rarest flora and fauna are still being destroyed at alarming rates. We will – we must – do more. Wildlife trafficking is not limited to a few countries. Our models of engagement and assistance can be applied and replicated broadly. We must do so quickly if we hope to put an end to this damaging global trade.

In 2016, we will increase our attention to the corruption that underlies, fuels, and enables wildlife trafficking. We will continue to build capacity and increasingly help countries apply the latest and most effective tools and techniques to ensure the effective disruption of this crime, the dismantlement of these networks, and the conviction and punishment of those responsible.

While much progress has been made, there is no shortage of challenges and much work remains. I am hopeful and, dare I say, confident that we can make further progress to reverse such trends in wildlife trafficking. Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Lowey, thank you for your strong leadership and partnership to combat wildlife trafficking. I welcome your questions.