

Statement of  
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**Introduction**

Good morning Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel and other Members of the Committee; I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

On behalf of Secretary Kerry, I'd like to thank the Committee for holding today's hearing on wildlife trafficking. This is an issue of critical importance and one that the world cannot afford to stand idle on. This is a global challenge that spans continents and crosses oceans.

Wildlife trafficking is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise that has expanded from a conservation concern to an acute security threat. The increasing involvement of organized crime in poaching and wildlife trafficking promotes corruption, threatens the peace and security of fragile regions, strengthens illicit trade routes, destabilizes economies and communities that depend on wildlife for their livelihoods and contributes to the spread of disease.

The United States government has worked on this complex issue for decades, and is committed to ending this deadly practice. As you are all aware, President Obama released the *National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking* on February 11, 2014. The National Strategy is a key outcome of his July 1, 2013 Executive Order (E.O) 13648, which established an interagency Task Force to address this global problem, co-chaired by the Departments of State, Justice, and Interior. The National Strategy is the result of intensive discussions among principals of the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking and identifies guiding principles and strategic priorities for U.S. efforts to stem illegal trade in wildlife. The *Strategy* further strengthens U.S. leadership on countering the global security threat posed by transnational criminal organizations that engage in illegal trade in wildlife. It sets three strategic priorities:

- **Strengthening domestic and global enforcement**, including assessing the related laws, regulations, and enforcement tools;
- **Reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife** at home and abroad; and,
- **Building international cooperation and public-private partnerships to combat illegal wildlife poaching and trade.**

The Strategy addresses the corruption, cross-border trafficking and laundering of criminal proceeds related to wildlife trafficking. Our ongoing efforts to curb the illegal wildlife trade will be guided by five principles that we believe will be crucial to our success: marshalling the full breadth of federal resources; strategically deploying those resources; utilizing the best available information to make decisions; considering all links of the illegal trade chain; and strengthening our relationships with other governments and partners around the world to address this challenge.

One of the key elements of the Strategy is expanding U.S. ivory trade controls, thereby closing existing loopholes to achieve a near total ban on the commercial trade of elephant ivory in the United States. As a major consumer of wildlife products (both legal and illegal), this domestic action sends a powerful message to the world and is critical to the overall solution.

Although the U.S. government has an important role to play in addressing wildlife trafficking, it cannot solve this problem alone. The United States believes that we must work with our partners across sectors and around the globe if we are to find a global solution to this problem.

Secretary Kerry has long championed our efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and the State Department is pleased to be continuing to carry on and broaden our international efforts. State has for many years coordinated an interagency group focused on wildlife trafficking, and we have worked very closely across all parts of the Department and with our colleagues in USAID on this issue. The E.O. and Task Force have led to a higher-level of coordination and intensified focus that will allow us to more strategically and effectively combat this pernicious trade by building better synergies across agencies, reducing redundancies and identifying complimentary lines of effort. We continue to make significant headway to tackle wildlife trafficking since the release of Executive Order (E.O.) 13648 on July 1, 2013.

### **Strengthening Global Enforcement**

Driven by high demand and high profits for wildlife and wildlife products, coupled with low risk of detection and often inadequate penalties, criminal syndicates and terrorist networks are increasingly drawn to wildlife trafficking, which generates revenues conservatively estimated at \$8-10 billion per year. Rhino horn for example is currently worth more than gold or cocaine, yet in many parts of the world those caught engaging in wildlife trafficking may risk small fines or minimal jail sentencing. Illegal trade in fisheries resources threatens food security in coastal communities globally and has economic impacts of \$10 to \$23.5 billion every year. We're working to change that equation by encouraging other countries to impose stronger legislation, better enforcement, and stiffer penalties.

Recent enforcement success and ongoing efforts include:

- In January 2014, The United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions imposing sanctions on individuals and entities in connection with the crises in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; we worked closely with our mission in New York to ensure that wildlife trafficking was included as a basis for sanctions in both resolutions.

- With the strong support of Chairman Royce, in November 2013, Secretary Kerry announced the first reward under the Transnational Organized Crime Reward Program to combat wildlife trafficking. The reward offers up to \$1 million for information leading to the dismantling of the Xaysavang Network, a transnational crime syndicate facilitating wildlife trafficking from Africa and Asia.
- The Department of State has long worked with foreign governments to enhance their capacity to fight wildlife trafficking, as well as within international fora and through our bilateral relationships to persuade our global partners to treat wildlife trafficking seriously. One such example is the U.S. delegation we led to the November 2013 China-U.S. Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation (JLG) meeting, during which U.S. Co-Chairs proposed that the United States and China explore ways to cooperate further on wildlife trafficking.
- In July 2013, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution from the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) – co-sponsored in the CCPCJ by the United States – encouraging member countries to make wildlife trafficking a serious crime as defined in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), which provides for enhanced international cooperation on extradition and other measures with respect to serious crimes.
- We are building law enforcement and criminal justice capacity and cooperation globally, to include East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America, aiming to strengthen policies and legislative frameworks and develop capacities to prosecute and adjudicate crimes related to wildlife trafficking.
- We continue to support the International Law Enforcement Academies in Gaborone, Botswana, and Bangkok, Thailand which have trained 350 law enforcement officers in wildlife crime investigations since 2002.

Together with the USAID, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and international partners, the State Department funded a global operation to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking, code-named “Operation Cobra 2,” from December 2013 through January 2014. The month-long operation brought together police, customs, and wildlife officials from 28 countries, including China, the United States, as well as African and Southeast Asian nations, with international enforcement agencies. Together they staged the operation out of two coordination centers in Nairobi and Bangkok, with links to field operatives across Africa and Asia. The investigative operation promoted cross-border law enforcement cooperation and enhanced capacity, and resulted in more than 400 arrests of wildlife criminals and 350 major wildlife seizures across Africa and Asia.

For the last decade the State Department has partnered with other U.S. government agencies to stand up regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) to tackle wildlife trafficking. The State Department and USAID are supporting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ASEAN-WEN, the South Asia WEN, the Central America WEN, the Horn of Africa WEN, and other emerging WENs around the world, including efforts in Central Africa, South America, and

Southern Africa. In March 2013, we worked to strengthen enforcement and existing partnerships by hosting at the CITES COP the First Global Meeting of the Wildlife Enforcement Networks. Our goal is the creation of a global network of regional wildlife enforcement networks.

Since its launch in 2005, ASEAN-WEN has served as a model for other WENs and produced tangible results, such as an 11-fold increase in the number of wildlife trafficking related arrests and seizures by member states and trained more than 3,000 government officials in law enforcement techniques. In 2013 ASEAN member countries announced their commitment to ownership and leadership of the WEN, through financial contributions that will sustain the ASEAN-WEN when USAID funding to the Network's Program Coordination Unit phases out later in 2014.

USAID recently expanded its support to the National Strategy in FY14 for existing programs, such as the U.S. government's flagship counter wildlife trafficking program, Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking in Asia, and a new partnership with the Department of Interior for technical assistance to combat wildlife crime in Asia.

USAID is supporting Project PREDATOR, implemented by INTERPOL. Project PREDATOR focuses on stopping the illegal trade in Asian big cats such as tigers and snow leopards and aims to develop communication, cooperation and collaboration with respect to intelligence exchange, initiating cross-border investigations, and training among law enforcement officials.

### **Wildlife Trafficking in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The United States recognizes the heavy toll that wildlife trafficking is taking in African nations, bringing some species to the brink of extinction. In 2013 alone an estimated 30,000 African elephants were killed for their ivory, more than 80 animals per day. Even starker is the decimation of forest elephant populations in Central Africa which have declined by approximately two-thirds between 2002 and 2012. Beyond this horrible slaughter, armed poachers kill hundreds of park rangers and eco-guards and threaten the very livelihoods of those who depend on these natural resources.

Thanks to the support of Congress, the Department of State is supporting law enforcement training and technical assistance to further efforts to combat wildlife trafficking in the region, including Kenya and South Africa, and other regional Sub-Saharan Africa programs. Foreign assistance will aim to strengthen policies and legislative frameworks; enhance investigative and law enforcement functions; support regional cooperation among enforcement agencies; and develop capacities to prosecute and adjudicate crimes related to wildlife trafficking. We are committed to do more and work smarter with partners around the world to support wildlife range states to maintain the integrity of their national borders and protect their iconic wildlife.

On February 12, President Obama reached agreement with his French counterpart, Francois Hollande, to work together to combat wildlife trafficking in Central Africa. As current facilitator for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), we devoted an extended session to the issue in the November 2013 CBFP Partners Meeting in November 2013; and we held an anti-poaching workshop in Gabon in 2012.

Another key effort in the region is the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) which has greatly increased its focus on combating wildlife trafficking investing \$9.8 million in FY13 funding on this issue. CARPE has increased investments combatting poaching and wildlife trafficking in each landscape, along transit routes and in major ports and cities, and at the policy level. For example, the SMART model for targeted patrolling is being introduced in each landscape, while a model for strengthening law enforcement, from arrest through prosecution, is being brought to Democratic Republic of Congo. These USAID-managed initiatives are complemented by USAID-funded grants and partnerships managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

In East Africa, USAID has two ongoing programs that address wildlife trafficking and focus on the communities that live with wildlife and rely on healthy populations of elephant and other species for tourism. These programs are:

- In Kenya, USAID's over 15 years of work with conservancies and their game guards has been instrumental in addressing poaching in important wildlife areas outside of government conservation areas. USAID has been active in the wildlife policy for many years culminating in a new Policy in 2013. USAID continues to assist targeted efforts on implementation working with the Kenyan Wildlife Service and other relevant agencies.
- In Tanzania, USAID has been the lead funder over the last ten years of the Tanzanian conservancy model – Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). This allows communities to benefit from wildlife on their land and aligns local incentives in favor of long-term conservation management. The WMAs are a key feature in addressing poaching in wildlife dispersal areas and game guard development.

Additionally, USAID is supporting anti-trafficking in Tanzania, focused on supporting national environmental policy and legislation, encouraging community-based natural resource management, and providing technical support to anti-poaching scouts. USAID/Tanzania works closely with USFWS on targeted efforts to address elephant poaching.

And in Southern Africa, the Department of State and USAID supported a workshop in Botswana in October 2013 that brought together key countries in the region to explore the creation of a Southern African Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN-SA) to coordinate regional enforcement efforts, which is moving forward with broad regional buy-in.

Continent-wide, the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program in 2013 held an exchange focused on anti-poaching and anti-trafficking best practices, connecting wildlife authorities and private sector stakeholders from key African countries with counterparts in the United States. U.S. Ambassadors in all sub-Saharan African countries and State Department principals continually push African leaders and senior government officials to take concrete steps to protect their wildlife, to prevent trafficking, and to put a stop to the corruption that enables the crimes to continue.

### **National Security Concerns**

Poaching presents serious security challenges for militaries and police forces in a number of African nations, whose protective services are often outgunned by heavily-armed criminal operations. Once small-scale, poachers are increasingly sophisticated, targeting and killing animals with weapons including semiautomatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. Nature reserves, a major source of tourism income for many countries, are becoming increasingly militarized. Traffickers exploit porous borders and weak institutions to profit from trading in illegal wildlife. Wildlife and wildlife products are transported through multi-stage illicit networks of corrupt middlemen and officials. There is evidence that wildlife trafficking syndicates benefit from trafficking activities and may even drive them financially.

While underscoring transnational organized crime is important, we are also increasingly concerned with links to terrorists and rogue military personnel. Like many illicit activities, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these actors are involved. We believe, however, that the Lord's Resistance Army, the Janjaweed, and al-Shabaab have been at least partly involved. There is evidence that some insurgent groups are directly involved in poaching or trafficking, who then trade wildlife products for weapons or safe haven. We believe that, at a minimum, they are likely sharing some of the same facilitators – corrupt customs and border officials, money launderers, supply chains, etc.

We still have much to learn about the full extent of the relationship between suspected terrorist financing and wildlife trafficking. One of the goals of our assistance efforts is to promote greater information sharing and coordination within and among governments, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, conservation groups and other actors working in this area.

Recognizing these broader security implications, as part of the E.O. President Obama charged the Task Force to develop recommendations to apply the 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) to wildlife trafficking.

### **Reduce Demand for Illegally Traded Wildlife**

Wildlife trafficking is a global problem that requires a global solution that addresses the supply, transit, and demand sides of the issue. Addressing demand is a complex and long-term issue, which depends in part on the species in question. It is not enough to increase public awareness. In order to end wildlife trafficking, the buying must stop.

Specific demand-reduction efforts include:

- USAID's "Asia Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking" (ARREST) project, which goes through 2016, has launched a series of strategically connected, Government-endorsed Demand Reduction Campaigns in Asia's three biggest wildlife market and transit countries, as well as first Asia-wide online/smartphone information-sharing platform that will help counter wildlife consumption.
- We funded a Public Service Announcement in partnership with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, released in November 2013, featuring Chinese actress Li Bing Bing and addressing

transnational organized crime and wildlife trafficking in Southeast Asia. Previously, State sponsored PSAs with conservationist Jane Goodall and actor Harrison Ford.

- We are encouraging our Embassies to host activities to commemorate the first ever March 3 World Wildlife Day. This effort will build upon public outreach activities undertaken by more than 54 U.S. Missions in our December 4, 2012, commemoration of “Wildlife Conservation Day.”

### **International Cooperation, Commitment, and Public-Private Partnerships**

When we discuss wildlife trafficking, we tend to think largely about Africa or Asia, but this is a truly global problem. No single country is the root of the wildlife trafficking problem and no one country can solve it alone. Governments around the world – including our own – are feeling the pressure, and we need to be proactive to stem this global problem. The combined efforts of all key stakeholders, including foreign government partners, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and other elements of civil society, are needed to effectively address the problem. The United States is itself a major demand and transit country, and compels us to be part of the solution to addressing this global scourge.

To address the challenge of wildlife trafficking, the State Department collaborates closely with other U.S. government agencies, foreign governments, and the non-governmental community in various international fora, taking global, regional, and bilateral approaches to find innovative and sustainable solutions.

Combating wildlife trafficking requires the engagement of governments in range states as well as transit and consumer countries throughout the world. We will continue to promote commitments to conservation and to fighting the crime and corruption that fuels wildlife trafficking both within countries directly facing this challenge and across borders, among regions, and globally. The U.S. government will further use diplomacy to secure commitments in international fora and at the highest levels of governments. We will continue to strengthen and ensure the effective implementation of international agreements and arrangements and work toward new measures, as appropriate, to meet this evolving challenge.

We have advocated for countries to work together to combat wildlife trafficking in a number of multilateral fora, including the G-8, APEC, ASEAN, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. We have also pressed multilateral institutions including the African Union, the African Development Bank, and Regional Economic Communities in Africa to take a more active stance against wildlife trafficking.

The Department was pleased to join the U.S. delegation, led by Associate Attorney General Tony West, to the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade hosted by U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague February 12-13, 2014. We were pleased with the outcome of the Conference and the commitments contained in the Conference Declaration.

We led the U.S. delegation to the December 2013 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) African Elephant Summit in Botswana, where ministers and senior officials from key African elephant range states, as well as crucial transit and destination countries for trafficked ivory, committed to take urgent measures to halt the illegal trade and secure elephant populations across Africa. USAID supported the meeting through their Wildlife TRAPS program with IUCN.

I participated in two minister-level events on the margins of the September 2013 UN General Assembly, including one hosted by Gabon and Germany to explore options for greater involvement of UN entities in the fight against wildlife trafficking.

We continue to work with USTR to address the growing illegal trade in wildlife under the auspices of various U.S. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), including in negotiations regarding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

We have actively engaged countries bilaterally as well. On February 17, Secretary Kerry and Indonesian Forest Minister Hasan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Conserving Wildlife and Combating Wildlife Trafficking in Jakarta. The MOU fosters bilateral cooperation in protecting critical habitat; building capacity to manage and conserve wildlife; incorporating scientific information into public awareness programs; strengthening conservation science and law enforcement; and stabilizing (and growing) populations of threatened and endangered species. This is the first MOU of its kind and a key step forward with Indonesia, one of the world's most biodiverse countries.

We have made strides in our bilateral engagement with China to combat wildlife trafficking over the last year. The United States and China destroyed approximately six tons each of our respective confiscated elephant ivory stockpiles. In addition to our global efforts to highlight the first ever World Wildlife Day on March 3 and raise awareness of the serious impacts of wildlife trafficking, we are coordinating separate events with the Chinese to celebrate the occasion.

## **Conclusion**

Combating wildlife trafficking is a complex challenge which demands a multifaceted holistic and whole-of-government approach. To this end, this year the United States will support efforts to combat wildlife trafficking and to conserve biodiversity worldwide. Within the framework of the National Strategy, we will work across the U.S. government to focus our international investments to combat wildlife trafficking in the most strategic and effective way possible.

The Administration seeks an open and inclusive dialogue about the challenges presented by wildlife trafficking and possible ways to address those challenges. In coming months, we will work with the Advisory Council, set up under the Executive Order, and with other Task Force members to implement the National Strategy and collaborate where appropriate with NGOs, private sector partners, and other members of the public to ensure the strategy's success. At the same time, we will continue to work with international partners to address this global challenge.



In closing I would like to reiterate Secretary Kerry's continued commitment to tackling this illegal trade. He has long been a champion of our efforts to combat wildlife trafficking, including during his tenure as Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We greatly appreciate the leadership that Congress has shown on this issue and for the support provided to enhance our ability to combat wildlife trafficking and dismantle the trans-national criminal organizations that profit from it. The support of Congress sends a powerful message to the world that we are united in our seriousness of purpose. We look forward to working with you in these efforts going forward.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and I would be happy to take any questions you may have.