

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Seventy-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 3 – 8 February 2025

INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM ON COMBATTING WILDLIFE CRIME (ICWC)
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

1. This document has been submitted by the Secretariat in relation to agenda item 38.2.
2. The ICWC Annual Report 2023, launched in August 2024, highlights the successes and achievements of Parties that benefitted from ICWC support and activities undertaken across the globe to better deter, detect, detain and dismantle the criminal networks involved in wildlife crime. It is available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).



TOGETHER AGAINST
WILDLIFE CRIME



2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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CONTENTS



5	Foreword
7	ICCWC Partners
9	Mission and Vision
11	ICCWC Approach
13	Tools and Services
15	Deter
27	Detect
35	Detain
45	Dismantle
57	Looking Ahead
55	Acknowledgements



GLOSSARY

AML	Anti-Money Laundering
CFT	Counter Terrorism Financing
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CRA	Corruption Risk Assessments
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GWP	Global Wildlife Program
ICCWC	International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
NRA	National Risk Assessment
OST	Operational Support Team
RIACM	Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting
RRG	Rapid Reference Guide
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SAWEN	South American Wildlife Enforcement Network
SuDWEN	South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network
TRACE	TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network
UNODC	The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
WBG	The World Bank Group
WEN	Wildlife Enforcement Network
WIRE	Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement Meeting
WCO	The World Customs Organization

FOREWORD



Ivonne Higuero
CITES Secretary-General

Wildlife crime continues to be a global epidemic causing serious destruction to nature, communities, public health and global security. The good news is that CITES Parties have demonstrated again and again their commitment to enhance their efforts, both individually and collectively, to combat this crime and rise to the challenge. ICCWC is proud to have supported many efforts and initiatives across 2023, which have resulted in significant strides and notable achievements.

Support was provided to 17 countries to implement the recommendations resulting from the use of the ICCWC Toolkit and Indicator Framework, to provide long-term lasting impact. ICCWC analysis allowed many countries to create base-lines against which progress can be measured and to create tailored strategies and action plans to combat wildlife crimes. ICCWC also facilitated international cooperation efforts that are yielding significant results. For example, the WIRE meeting, involved 36 countries, facilitated 86 informal bilateral discussions, and led to the initiation of joint investigations and new operations.

Operation Thunder marked the highest participation and engagement since the Thunder-series began, with 133 countries participating. The operation yielded impressive results with over 2,000 seizures of wild animals and plants and 500 arrests, while some investigations continue to bring offenders identified during the operation to justice. This report details some of the seizures made, as well as information on trends, data and ICCWC support in the pre and post operation phases.

ICCWC provided capacity building, training, resources and activities throughout 2023 as it has done in the past years. For example, the Consortium helped countries to combat corruption, address wildlife crime linked to the Internet, and trained over 400 law enforcement, financial and private sector professionals in addressing financial crime and money laundering.

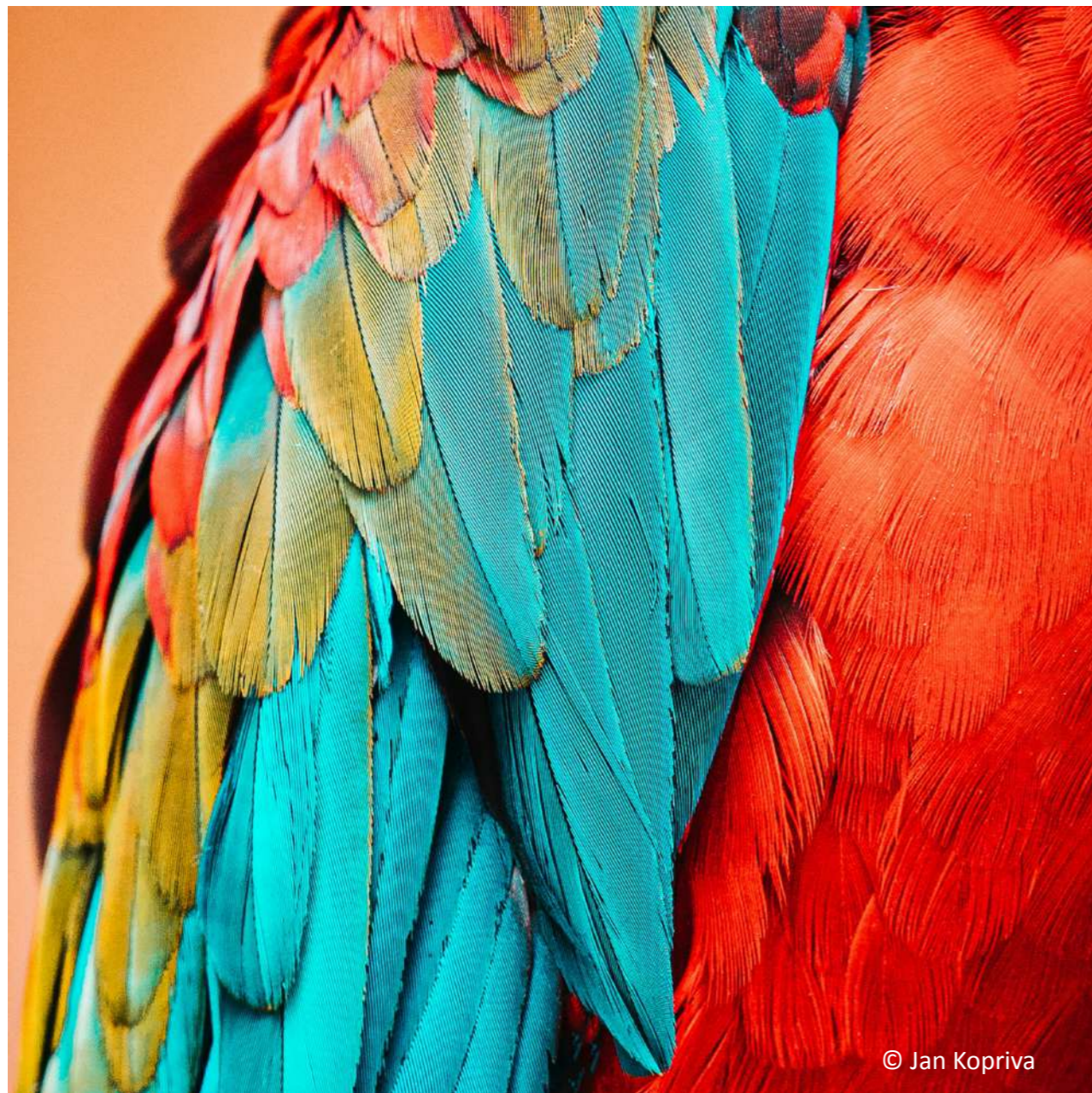
Focus stories throughout this report showcase some of the Consortium's collaborative efforts, as well as the importance of international police and customs cooperation. Particularly noteworthy ICCWC activities are the successes achieved by the wildlife forensics laboratory in Uganda, the investigation of the largest rhino horn seizure in Singapore's history with ICCWC assistance, targeted support provided to West and Central Africa and support to the CITES Big Cats Task Force meeting.

ICCWC is proud to support CITES Parties globally and contribute to their efforts to implement CITES and combat wildlife crime. We take this opportunity to thank all our Parties and partners for their continued transformative vision to work in partnership to achieve our shared goals. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the donors to ICCWC for their generosity in supporting our mission and without whom our work would not be possible.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We trust that you will find it informative and that it will provide you with a good overview of the work undertaken by ICCWC and the significant efforts of countries across the world to combat wildlife crime. Together we are stronger and able to deliver impactful activities, collectively working towards a world free of wildlife crime.



ICCWC PARTNERS



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CITES: The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) sets the rules for international trade in CITES-listed animals and plants. These rules must be implemented and enforced by the countries that are signatories to the Convention.



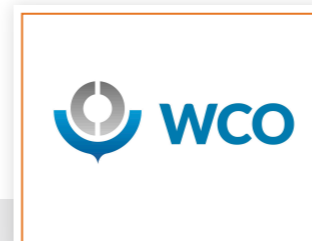
INTERPOL: INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization with 196 member countries cooperating across borders to share and process criminal information globally.



UNODC: The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) leads the global fight against illicit drugs and transnational organized crime with an extensive network of field offices worldwide.



WBG: The World Bank Group (WBG) works to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet. In more than 170 countries, the WBG provides financing, advice, and innovative solutions that improve lives, create jobs, and confront the most urgent global development challenges.



WCO: The World Customs Organization (WCO) facilitates cross-border trade by promoting best customs practices, enforcing standardized regulations, and combating illegal trade.

How ICCWC Works

Delivery of the Consortium's activities is overseen by its Senior Experts Group (SEG) and supported by its Technical Experts Group (TEG), in which each of the five partner organizations are represented. The SEG identifies priorities for the implementation of activities, takes decisions on initiatives to support, and oversees overall effectiveness of delivery. An activity delivered by ICCWC is normally led by one "lead" ICCWC partner. This partner takes responsibility for implementation of the activity, closely coordinating and collaborating with other relevant ICCWC partners and stakeholders in its delivery. In certain circumstances, multiple ICCWC partner organizations may jointly "lead" an activity, sharing collective responsibility for its implementation.

Mission

A world free of wildlife crime.

Vision

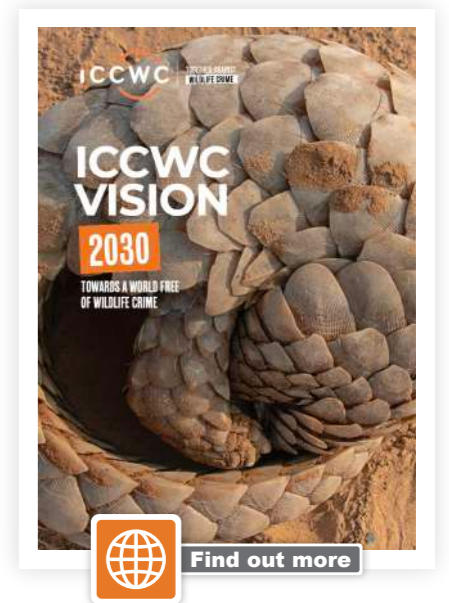
To strengthen criminal justice systems and provide coordinated support at national, regional and international level to combat wildlife and forest crime.



© DennisVDWater

The ICCWC Vision 2030

ICCWC has established a long-term vision of a world free of wildlife crime. The ICCWC Vision 2030 outlines how ICCWC will work towards a world free of wildlife crime, following a Theory of Change designed to support and strengthen wildlife authorities, police, customs and entire criminal justice systems to ensure that they effectively respond to the threat.



ICCWC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The work of ICCWC contributes mainly to **SDG 14: Life Below Water** and **SDG 15: Life on Land**.

SDG 15: Life on Land includes specific targets to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and taking urgent action to combat these issues is at the core of ICCWC's mission.

The work of ICCWC is also directly linked to **SDG 13: Climate Action**, **SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** and **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals**.



ICCWC Approach

ICCWC mobilizes a variety of tools and services to build long-term capacity among national agencies responsible for wildlife law enforcement to effectively combat wildlife crime. Activities focus on deterring, detecting, detaining and dismantling criminal networks.



TOOLS AND SERVICES




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ICCWC partner agencies provide a range of training courses, tools, services and capacity building activities designed to strengthen criminal justice systems and build long-term capacity among authorities to effectively address wildlife crime. Information on these can be found in the ICCWC Menu of Services.

ICCWC Menu of Services

The ICCWC Menu of Services is an indicative list of training courses, tools and services available through ICCWC. Based on identified priorities and needs, and subject to the availability of resources and funds, targeted capacity building and operational support could be provided by the Consortium.



 [Find out more](#)



DETER



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Throughout 2023, ICCWC worked to bolster awareness of wildlife crime and collaborated with law enforcement agencies, policymakers, governmental bodies, and civil society to reinforce initiatives aimed at combating and deterring this transnational threat. These efforts included training sessions, workshops, presentations, online courses and knowledge sharing across all aspects of wildlife crime including anti-money laundering, addressing financial crime and combating corruption.



10 WORKSHOPS / TRAINING IN AML/CFT
OVER 400 LAW ENFORCEMENT, FINANCIAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR PROFESSIONALS TRAINED

Money Laundering and Financial Crime

National Strategies for Anti-money Laundering (AML) & Counter-Terrorism Financing (CFT) Compliance

In 2023, over 400 law enforcement, financial and private sector professionals were trained in aspects related to anti-money laundering and addressing financial crime. Over 10 workshops and trainings focused on AML, CTF compliance and identification of risk mitigating measures were held across Africa. This included national and provincial workshops for the banking and environmental sectors in the Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mozambique. ICCWC, led by the World Bank Group (WBG) and with support from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) funded Global Wildlife Program (GWP), devised these specialized technical assistance programs through National Risk Assessments (NRAs) and development and implementation of national strategies.

AML/CFT NRAs and roll out of the Environmental and Natural Resource Crimes Module (Module 10) of the World Bank Environmental and Natural Resource Risk Assessment Tool were also completed for Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Sudan. In Madagascar, the WBG supported the development of the country's new AML/CFT law which was adopted in December 2023.

How is financial crime and wildlife crime linked?

Illegal trade of wildlife yields significant profits, frequently channeling through financial networks intertwined with various criminal enterprises, such as money laundering and other financial crimes. Perpetrators of wildlife crimes commonly deploy money laundering tactics to evade detection and obscure their unlawful profits. It is imperative to investigate and disrupt the financial channels linked to wildlife crime to effectively combat this illicit trade.



Find out more



Marilyne Pereira Goncalves

Senior Financial Sector Specialist,
World Bank

“ Since 2017, we have worked with countries to assist them to better understand their money-laundering risks. This work includes WBGs environmental crimes risk module, which supports countries to assess money-laundering risks related to environmental crimes and to identify risk-mitigating measures to reduce related illicit financial flows. Every year, criminals make millions of dollars by illegally harvesting and trafficking our planet’s natural resources. Following and recovering those proceeds are important as it often helps to identify and bring down the wider networks and kingpins behind these crimes.”

Development of National Lists of Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs)

Corruption and money laundering seriously undermines the ability of States to ensure inclusive growth and reduce poverty and constrains the potential for economic development. Led by WBG through the GEF-funded GWP, this project aims to help countries to develop national lists of PEPs as a mean to mobilize anti-money laundering preventive regimes and customer due diligence procedures to tackle corruption related to wildlife and other environmental crimes.

Building capacity to conduct financial investigations

ICCWC delivered specialized trainings in financial investigations to enhance capacity of law enforcement to detect and combat financial crime.

Seven countries in West and Central Africa and Madagascar were trained by ICCWC partners on financial investigations linked to wildlife crimes. INTERPOL and the CITES Secretariat collaborated to provide law enforcement personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills to detect, prevent and disrupt financial crime networks that allow illegal trade in wildlife specimens. Participants to these initiatives were trained to detect money laundering, fraud and corruption, as well as on the use of open-source tools to assist investigations. As a result, INTERPOL was able to provide further targeted bilateral support to Madagascar on a related and ongoing investigation involving the arrest of a suspect attempting to smuggle turtles to Asia.



Combating Corruption

Fighting corruption is critical to stopping wildlife crime by ensuring that law enforcement agencies are able to operate independently and that laws and regulations are enforced fairly and consistently. UNODC, as guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, leads the Consortium’s work on combating corruption, in close cooperation with ICCWC Partners.

In 2023, work continued to prevent corruption in wildlife and forest management agencies:

- In Kenya, support continued for corruption mitigation work with Kenya Wildlife Service and Kenya Forest Service including enhancing reporting to the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission.
- In Mozambique, an Institutional Integrity Committee was established and the Committee was supported in its efforts to implement the corruption risk mitigation plan of the country. Development of a Code of Ethics for National Agency for Environmental Quality Control (AQUA) was initiated through a participatory process.
- In Nigeria, a series of meetings were held with four national agencies to build corruption risk mitigation capacity, keep mitigation plans up to date and identify future areas of support including development of a code of conduct, anti-corruption and ethics guidelines, and a sensitization package on wildlife and forest crime. A study tour of the Nigeria National Park Service to the Kenya Wildlife Service will be organised to learn from best practices from one of the most advanced wildlife management services in Africa.

77th Meeting of CITES Standing Committee (SC77)


To promote awareness of wildlife crime and the support available through ICCWC, two informative side events were held in the margins of SC77. The topics covered included illegal trade data and evidenced-based interventions, along with enhanced responses to wildlife crime.



During one of the side events, the CITES Secretariat and UNODC presented the CITES Illegal Trade Database and launched the new database dissemination platform. The database is a powerful tool that will allow illegal trade data to become an accessible and valuable resource for Parties. It will inform their decision making and support the development of targeted and evidence-based responses to combat wildlife crime. It will also inform global research and analysis studies on wildlife and forest crime undertaken by ICCWC.



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Credit: Alejandro Morgado (Unsplash)

CITES Illegal Trade Database

 [Find out more](#)



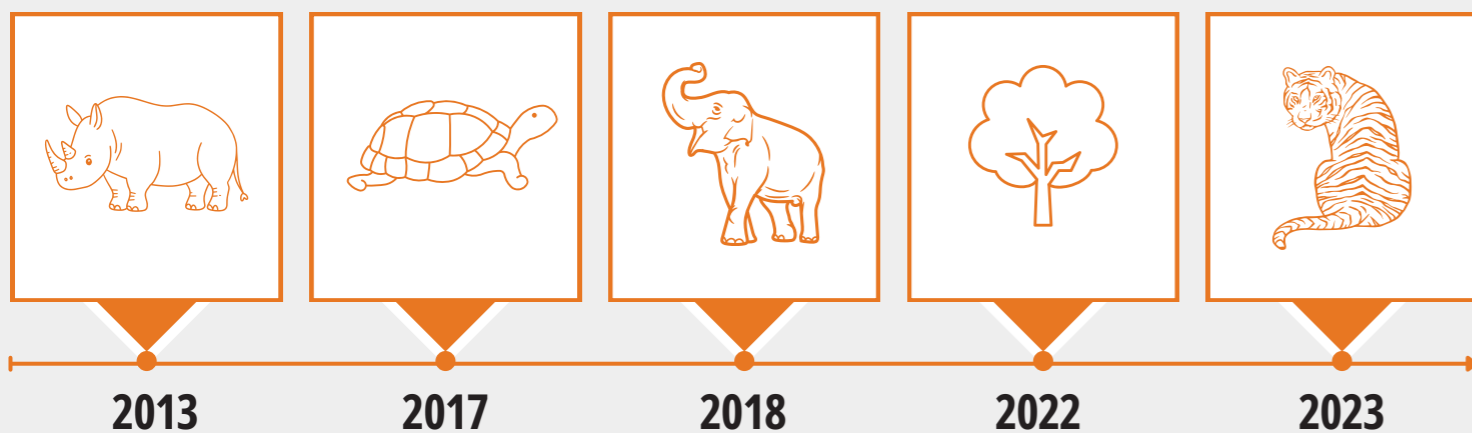
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FOCUS STORY: GLOBAL COLLABORATION TO COMBAT ILLEGAL TRADE IN BIG CATS

CITES Task Forces bring together authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement, experts and other relevant stakeholders from around the world to discuss matters related to species significantly affected by illegal trade and how to address it. Task Force meetings develop strategies, measures and activities to improve implementation and enforcement of the Convention and address wildlife crime. It further facilitates knowledge-sharing and strengthened regional and international cooperation.



ICCWC has contributed to several CITES Task Forces:



IMPACT

- ✓ Strategies, measures and activities identified that provide a solid basis for strengthened efforts aimed at combatting illegal trade in specimens of big cat species.
- ✓ Shared information and intelligence between countries on illegal trade routes.
- ✓ Enhanced capacity for frontline cooperation and coordination.
- ✓ Identified best practices and innovative approaches to address illegal trade in big cats.

“Over the past century we have been losing big cats, one of the planet’s most majestic predators, at an alarming rate. In recent years, there has been progress in conservation efforts, coexistence strategies, and enforcement measures to tackle illegal trade in big cats, but more needs to be done. The Task Force contributed to strengthen Parties responses to illegal trade in big cats.”

Ms Ivonne Higuero
CITES Secretary-General

CITES BIG CATS TASK FORCE

The aim of the Task Force was to develop strategies to strengthen law enforcement responses to combat illegal trade in big cats and their parts and derivatives, focusing on big cat species that are of highest concern from a conservation and illegal trade perspective: Cheetah, Mainland Clouded Leopard, Sunda Clouded Leopard, Lion, Jaguar, Leopard, Tiger and Snow Leopard.

OUTCOMES - Measures and activities to be undertaken to address the following key topics:

- Strengthening effective implementation and enforcement of the Convention with regards to illegal trade in big cat specimens.
- Strengthening regulation of facilities breeding big cats in captivity to prevent and detect any illegal trade from such facilities and deploy strengthened enforcement measures.
- Reducing demand to combat illegal trade in big cat specimens.
- Identification of big cat specimens in trade.
- Strengthening regional and international collaboration to address illegal trade in specimens of big cats.

Over **70 REPRESENTATIVES**

from

28 COUNTRIES

across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America along with

- International inter-governmental organizations
- Regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks
- Non-governmental organizations



CITES Big Cats Task Force was generously funded by:



DETECT



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Across 2023, ICCWC enhanced countries' capabilities to more effectively detect and counter wildlife crime. Embracing innovative technology solutions, these initiatives included the enhancement of global wildlife forensics to aid wildlife crime scene management efforts. Work also included support to countries to combat wildlife crime linked to the Internet and on how to detect modus operandi used by transnational crime networks.

Global Wildlife Forensics

Training on Species Identification and Forensic Techniques

Species identification is a crucial element of building strong cases for court. In Latin America, INTERPOL convened representatives of national police from six countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) including investigators and forensics experts for training in species identification and forensic techniques. Two wildlife forensics needs assessments were also conducted in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Indonesia respectively, to guide ICCWC's future capacity building initiatives in collaboration with TRACE Wildlife Forensics Network.



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Species ID Training in Santiago, Chile.

African Wildlife Forensics Network

ICCWC continues to support the African Wildlife Forensics Network (AWFN). The network continues to grow, providing a platform for training, collaboration and sharing of information to avoid duplication of efforts. Successes in 2023 include:

- Four laboratory exchanges involving five African countries for knowledge transfer among members.
- Laboratory training conducted to support the ongoing professional development of AWFN members.
- Publication of revised edition of the Wildlife Crime Scene Guide for First Responders.
- Eighth annual meeting including members from 14 African countries.
- Steering and technical committees established for running of the network.



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Pathogen Research

A research project to evaluate the potential threat of infectious diseases in efforts to combat the illegal wildlife trade was concluded in 2023. The project involved applying MinION technology, using a device previously demonstrated for use in human and livestock viral screening, to pathogen screening of illegal-wildlife trade products.

The work was conducted in partnership with TRACE, the University of Edinburgh and with laboratories in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Zimbabwe to characterize and mitigate the risks of zoonotic disease to human and agricultural health.

The project was successful in developing and applying novel diagnostic methods for wildlife pathogen identification and transferring these into laboratories in Malaysia and Zambia.

The process of establishing this capacity also enhanced staff laboratory and data analysis skills and experience, as well as supported the development of labs in other countries. Wildlife disease diagnostics has been enhanced as a result of this project.



Lab technician, McDonald Shiri from Zimbabwe conducting MinION library preparation



Trainees from labs in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Wildlife Crime Scene Management

ICCWC enhanced the capacity of rangers, police and prosecutor investigators in managing wildlife crime scenes. Following a training needs assessment, new training curricula were developed for rangers in Uganda. The curricula cover a range of topics, including operations, intelligence, investigation, crime scene management, and court procedures. This initiative aims to standardize training, ensuring UWA rangers are well-equipped, professional, and ethically sound in their crucial roles.

In 2020, wildlife crime scene awareness training was institutionalized at a wildlife college in Mweka, Tanzania, in partnership with TRACE and the Netherlands Forensics Institute. The training programme is now embedded within the national training curriculum and is used to educate new wildlife crime scene first responders in Tanzania. In 2023, 280 rangers received this wildlife crime scene awareness training, delivered by the instructors that took part in the initial train the trainer programme. This sustainable institutionalization approach is considered best practice and was also replicated at the Garoua Wildlife College in Cameroon.

Wildlife crime scene awareness training was delivered as an element in broader trainings in other countries including Lao PDR and Viet Nam.



[Watch video](#)

Digital forensics and Combating Wildlife Crime Linked to the Internet

There are numerous challenges posed by sophisticated criminal networks using advanced technologies and tactics to avoid detection and prosecution. ICCWC supports efforts to investigate wildlife crime linked to the Internet and to mobilize digital forensics against wildlife crime.

Training on the Use of Suspect Profiles in Wildlife Investigations and Digital Forensics

Participants from national police, wildlife protection and other enforcement agencies from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam received training on digital forensics and investigation. Electronic evidence is a component of most criminal activities and digital forensics support is crucial for law enforcement investigations. The training focused on the intelligence cycle with emphasis on the collection of nominal information from open sources, along with the use of phone, financial and digital forensics data in a suspect profile, network mapping and practical exercises.

Training on Covert Human Intelligence Source Recruitment and Handling

ICCWC strengthened capacity on covert human intelligence source recruitment and handling in Thailand. UNODC trained several law enforcement departments on techniques and tools for recruiting human sources to assist in illegal wildlife investigations. This was the first time the course was developed and delivered for the purpose of combating crimes that affect the environment, including wildlife crime, and results suggest that the course can serve as a template for similar courses in the future.

Cyber Enabled Wildlife Crime Investigation Trainings

In Indonesia, participants from enforcement agencies were trained on cyber enabled wildlife crime investigation. Delivered by INTERPOL and Australian Federal Police Covert Cyber investigations trainers, the training included investigation tools, approaches and practical tools to engage with wildlife traffickers, investigate and gather prosecutable evidence of illegal wildlife trade on social media and other digital mediums.



Zhiqiang Tao

Law Enforcement Advisor,
UNODC Environment Team,
Asia Pacific

“ We help set up specialized task forces and provide mentorship to national authorities on wildlife crime investigations. By fostering inter-agency collaboration and sharing of intelligence, we have supported national counterparts to dismantle transnational trafficking networks. It is rewarding to see enforcement officers progress through continuous support and training to carry out successful operations and prosecutions.”



FOCUS STORY: USING FORENSIC SCIENCE TO COMBAT WILDLIFE CRIME

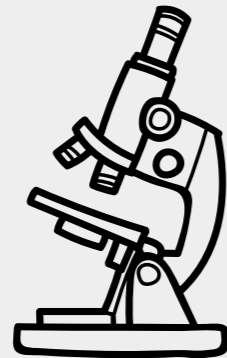
In 2022, a wildlife DNA laboratory became operational in Uganda, with support from ICCWC and in partnership with TRACE and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). The laboratory has been essential in supporting wildlife crime cases in Uganda and other African countries and has yielded significant results to help combat wildlife crime.



UGANDA WILDLIFE DNA LABORATORY



- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia



37 INVESTIGATIONS

investigations of wildlife crime supported by the lab

IN 2023



WATCH THE VIDEO

“

Now as we speak, the number of cases with successful prosecutions is going up because of that lab.

Joel Lugaye Heri
Criminal Intelligence Officer,
INTERPOL

”

IMPACT

- ✓ Supports wildlife crime investigations across Africa.
- ✓ South-South cooperation, providing training and mentorship to lab personnel in other countries.
- ✓ Supports prosecutions through forensic casework reports and delivery of expert testimony.

“

The major value of this work is that cases that UWA could not prosecute due to a lack of evidence are now being prosecuted. Additionally, it serves to exonerate individuals wrongly arrested on suspicion of illegal bush meat possession. The main impact of the Uganda lab, when combined with stringent wildlife legislation, is the heightened deterrence against illegal harvesting and trafficking of wildlife within Uganda.

Patrick Chiyo, Lab Manager, Uganda



”



TRAINING & MENTORSHIP

The lab manager provided training and mentorship to technicians at the Government Chemist Laboratory Authority in Tanzania, supporting 12 cases as well as visiting new lab premises at Dodoma and advising on improvements to laboratory design and equipment selection. A week of training was delivered to 3 technicians at the Central Veterinary Research Institute laboratory in Zambia, working on a case and resulting in submission of a forensic case report.



DETAIN

In 2023, ICCWC provided a strong, coordinated response to detain and disrupt illegal trade in wildlife across source, transit and destination countries. This included the coordination of the annual global Operation Thunder, Operation Mekong Dragon V, an annual WIRE Meeting and the Fifth ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime Working Group on Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife and Timber. Efforts also included intelligence sharing through regional and cross border activities, support to Wildlife Enforcement Networks and to countries through targeted RIACMs on species-specific case investigations from seizures related to global operations.

Operation Thunder 2023



Operation Coordination Unit (OCU) established for Operation Thunder 2023.

 Find out more

Ahead of Operation Thunder 2023, representatives from 61 countries met to review the results of Operation Thunder 2022. This provided an opportunity to prepare for the 2023 operation by discussing key cases and targets, as well as lessons learned from the previous operation.

During the operational phase of Operation Thunder 2023, an Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) was established in order to streamline information management and communication between countries, as well as to monitor, record and analyze all seizure information.

Operation Thunder does not begin or end with the actual operation. Pre-operational activities are supported during the tactical phase of the operation and post operational activities and targeted case meetings are all key elements that contribute to a successful Thunder Operation.

Data showed that:

- ▶ 60% of wildlife trafficking cases were linked to transnational organized crime groups, operating along routes also known for smuggling other illegal products.
- ▶ Protected reptiles and marine life are being exploited for luxury brand fashion.
- ▶ Online sales platforms continue being used to sell wildlife, timber and marine goods.
- ▶ Illegal and legal timber are often blended for transport to make it difficult to detect illegally logged wood.
- ▶ Transnational organized crime groups resort to high levels of document fraud, particularly the use of forged certifications and CITES permits and permit reuse.



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SEIZURES: OPERATION THUNDER 2023



© INTERPOL

Czech Republic authorities intercepted the smuggling of two golden handed tamarins.



© INTERPOL

Canadian authorities confiscated protected cacti species.



© INTERPOL

Bolivian authorities seized bags of eggs from a CITES-listed species.



© INTERPOL

Thailand authorities seized turtle species after examining hundreds of parcels, suitcases, vehicles, boats and cargo.



© INTERPOL

Tanzania authorities seized leopard skin and elephant tusks.



Brazilian authorities inspected dozens of timber and plant species during the operation.

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Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings

What are RIACMs?

Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings (RIACMs) brings together law-enforcement officers directly involved in the investigation of a case, to enhance information sharing between countries and with INTERPOL, mentor investigators and catalyze their work on transnational environmental crime investigations.

4 POST-OPERATIONAL THUNDER MEETINGS AND RIACMS
 INVOLVING **141** LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS

Jaguar Trafficking

Five countries met to give an update on red notices targeting jaguar traffickers and active criminal networks, discuss newly identified trafficking routes as well as recent incidents and ongoing cases.

Wildlife Smuggling in Shipping Containers

Seven countries met to share information on the status of their wildlife crime cases involving smuggling in shipping containers. INTERPOL provided inputs on the analysis of the trafficking routes and modus operandi involved in this crime area, as well as the relevant INTERPOL Notices, to help national law enforcement teams in their investigations.

Rhino Horn Trafficking

Police and wildlife service representatives in Singapore shared information and DNA samples taken from a rhino horn seizure. This helped identify a supply chain for further investigation.

Pangolin Scales

20 police, customs and wildlife officers met in Singapore to discuss the investigation status of their cases on pangolin scales found in shipping containers from Africa to Asia. Seven different countries were represented from both continents. INTERPOL provided inputs on the analysis of the trafficking routes and modus operandi involved in this crime area, as well as the relevant INTERPOL Notices.



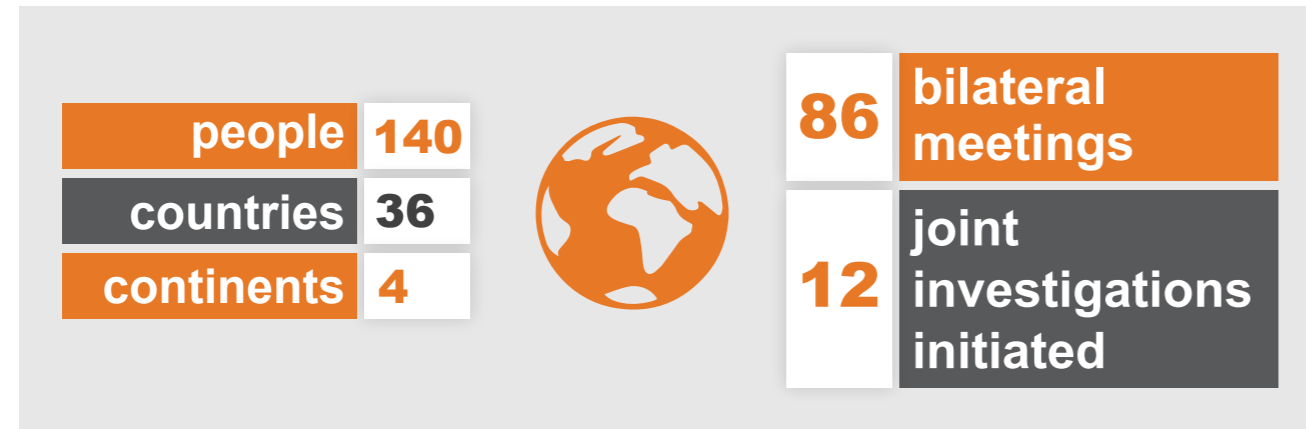
Colonel Johan Jooste

Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, South African Police

“ Experience shows that combating and investigating wildlife crime requires parallel intelligence and investigations by addressing criminal, financial, cyber and corrupt activities supported by forensics sciences along the criminal supply chain. It encompasses the building of formal and informal communication networks between countries to build trust and respond to trafficking activities as demonstrated during the Operation Thunder series. It takes a powerful integrated global network to successfully combat transnational organized wildlife crime. ”

WIRE Meeting 2023

Over 140 representatives from 36 countries and territories gathered for the seventh iteration of the Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meeting in Abu Dhabi in November 2023. This event brought together authorities from four continents, joining forces to foster cooperation to combat wildlife and forest crime. Led by UNODC, these meetings provide specialized platforms for investigators, prosecutors and other practitioners to combat wildlife crimes.



WIRE meetings aim to address the intricacies of international cooperation by promoting informal networks and facilitate communication among criminal justice practitioners in Africa and Asia, and Latin America. During the WIRE meeting, **86 informal bilateral sessions** took place, enabling national authorities to discuss previous and ongoing cases, exchange contacts, and identify opportunities for joint investigations.

A criminal network operating across Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China, Indonesia, Madagascar, Peru, Thailand was targeted and a major seizure was completed through cooperation established at WIRE 2023.



© UNODC



WIRE bilateral meeting and panel discussion.

© UNODC

“ WIRE meetings gave me the opportunity to meet prosecutors and experts from other jurisdictions, making future collaboration easy. ”

Assistant Chief State Counsel at the Directorate of Public Prosecution in Nigeria

Operation Mekong Dragon (OMD V)

The fifth edition of Operation Mekong Dragon (OMD) took place from April to September 2023. This is a joint Customs-led operation in Asia-Pacific with a focus on illegal wildlife trade and drug trafficking.

The steep increase in CITES listed species confiscations in 2023 suggests a potential resurgence of trafficking following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Amid the concerning rise in trafficking, the record-breaking number of seizures also reflects the growing proficiency of customs authorities in the region, especially those involved since OMD I.

Authorities from

23 countries intercepted

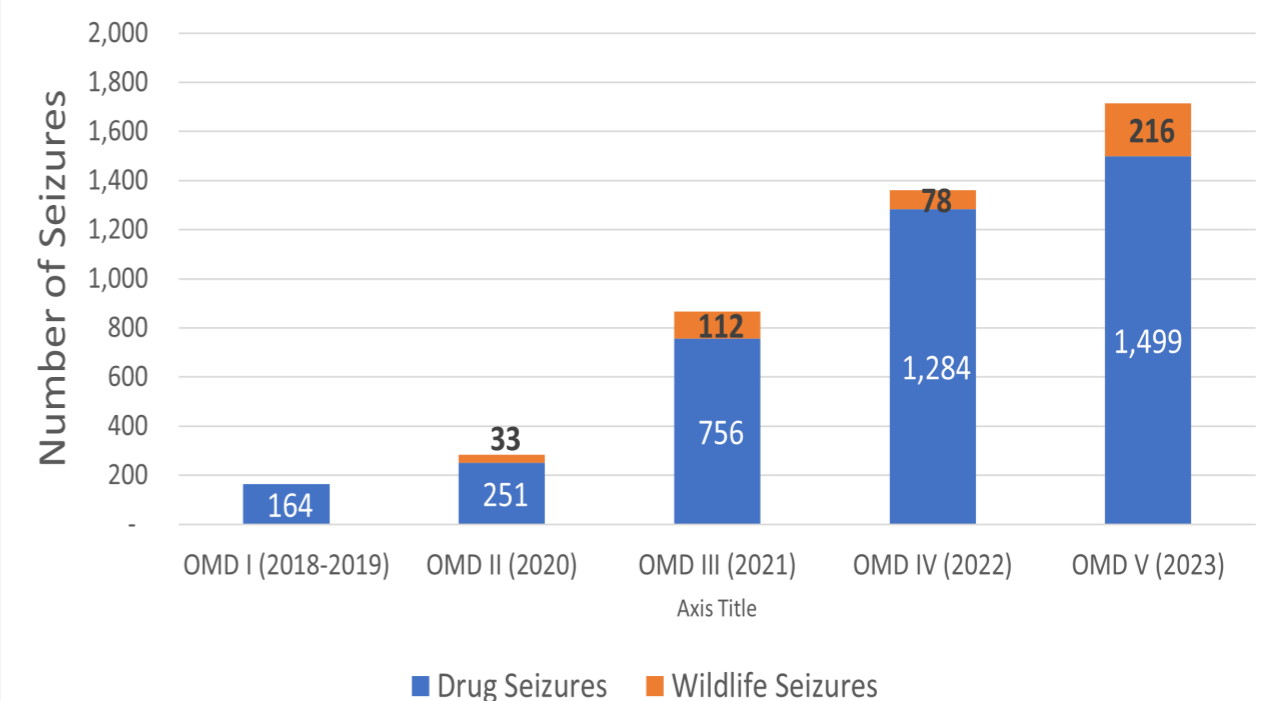
1,715 cases including

216 wildlife & timber seizures



26% increase from 2022.

Wildlife and Drug Seizure Trends Across OMD Cycles



OMD V Seizures



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© UNODC



© UNODC

Regional forum supported by ICCWC, leads to convictions

The Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) is an ASEAN regional forum that deals with transnational crime threats. With UNODC support, in 2018 SOMTC recognized the trafficking in wildlife and timber as one of its ten priority areas and developed an action plan with a working group led by Thailand.

To date, five meetings of the Working Group on Illicit Trafficking of Wildlife and Timber have been convened and coordinated enforcement efforts have resulted in the imprisonment of several wildlife trafficking kingpins.

Targeted Support to Wildlife Enforcement Networks

Regional and inter-regional cooperation is essential to combating wildlife trafficking effectively. A Wildlife Enforcement Network (WEN) is a regional, or sub-regional network involving a collection of national agencies responsible for wildlife law enforcement.

South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN)

The South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) received support to enhance the capabilities of prosecutors and judges. Technical expertise was shared through a regional workshop held in Nepal, to strengthen prosecutors' skills in handling cross-border wildlife crimes, including addressing issues like corruption and money laundering. Participants discussed the establishment of a prosecutors network to support the prosecution of serious wildlife crimes in South Asia. UNODC provided expert advice on the implementation of key elements of the UNTOC and on harmonization of laws and policies.

South American Wildlife Enforcement Network (SuDWEN)

Over the past two years, UNODC and ICCWC have been supporting countries South America to bolster their joint efforts through SudWEN. In 2023, Peru assumed a pivotal role in combating wildlife crime by taking on the Chairmanship of SudWEN, marking a significant milestone in South America's efforts.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Specialized Prosecutor's Office in Environmental Matters, Peru will take leadership of SudWEN for two years, focusing on enhancing cooperation among law enforcement agencies, strengthening capacity building, and fostering regional collaboration to address wildlife trafficking.

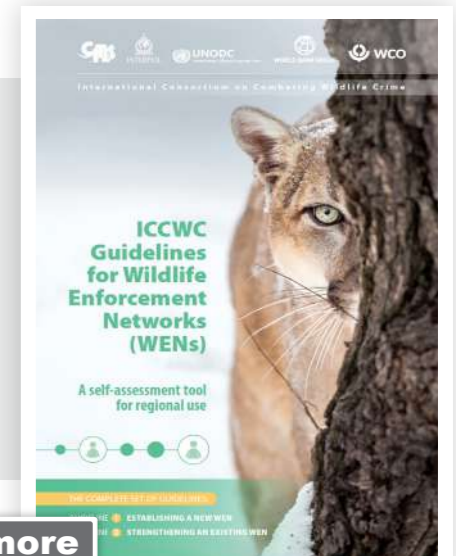


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Launch of Peruvian Chairmanship of SudWEN in Lima, November 2023.

Dedicated WEN webpage

In support of one of the outcomes of the 4th global meeting of the WENs, ICCWC has developed a dedicated web page for Wildlife Enforcement Networks. This includes resources, information, reports on Global WEN meetings and contact details for each WEN. All reports from previous meetings and information available, as submitted by the different WENs, can be accessed on the website.



Find out more

FOCUS STORY: THUNDER SERIES: SUPPORTING EFFORTS FROM SEIZURE TO PROSECUTION

ICCWC provides targeted support before, during and after Thunder Operations to coordinate countries and facilitate investigations. During Operation Thunder 2022, the National Parks Board of Singapore executed the largest rhino horn seizure in Singapore's history with support from ICCWC partners. Between Thunder Operations in 2023, led by INTERPOL and WCO, efforts focused on further investigating the case.



OPERATION THUNDER 2023



ICCWC supported investigations by national authorities through targeted support, including:

- 1 An INTERPOL-led scoping mission to Lao PDR and an Operational Support Team deployed to South Africa to enhance cooperation between South Africa and Singapore on the investigation.
- 2 A Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM) in Singapore in March 2023 with South Africa, Singapore and Laos authorities.

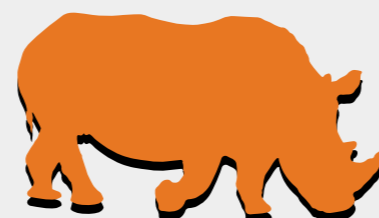
THE RHINO HORNS CASE:

The suspect was travelling from South Africa to Lao PDR and was stopped on a layover in Singapore. After finding rhino horns in a bag search, the suspect was arrested.

Since the rhino horns may have constituted proceeds of crime, another investigation into **money laundering** was launched with additional corruption charges being added to his indictment.

The largest rhino horn seizure in Singapore's history

20 pieces
OF RHINO HORN



Weighing approximately **34.25 kg** seized at Changi International Airport, Singapore



RESULTING IN:

- ➔ The sharing of intelligence aimed at identifying a potential criminal organization and supply chain.
- ➔ The detection of a likely modus operandi.
- ➔ The need for capacity building in developing suspect profiles and digital forensics for Lao PDR police officers. A regional specialized training was organized in Singapore in May 2023.

IMPACT

- ✔ Resulted in highest penalty for smuggling wildlife ever imposed by Singapore with the suspect sentenced in 2024 to two years imprisonment.
- ✔ Strengthened international police and customs cooperation.
- ✔ Helped identify capacity building needs.
- ✔ Showed that intelligence-led approaches help to efficiently dismantle transnational criminal networks and high-value targets.
- ✔ Police officers trained in new investigative skills.

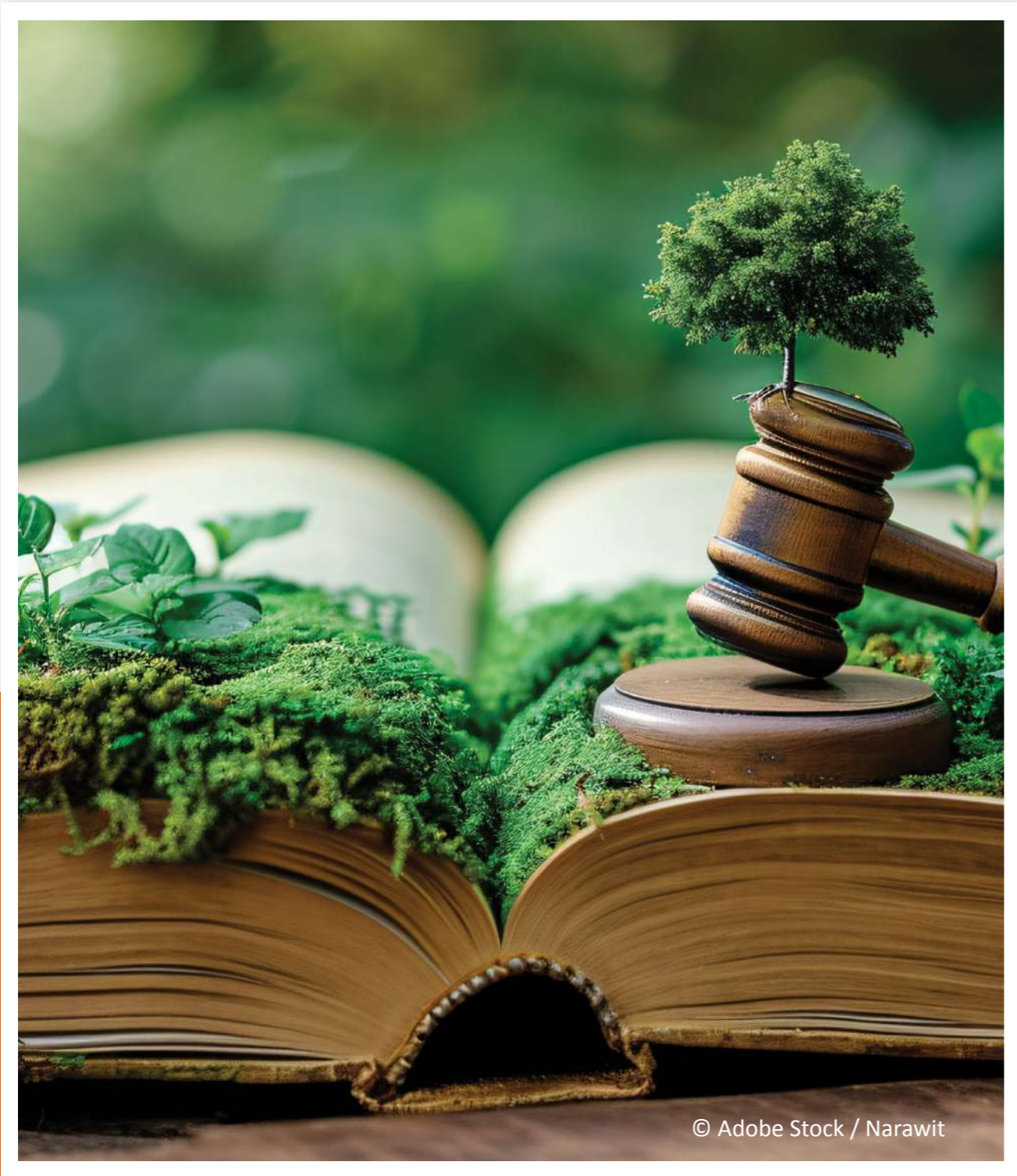
“
Singapore acknowledges the crucial role played by ICCWC. This is why we actively engage in and contribute to ICCWC meetings and operations and capability development activities. International and inter-agency collaboration is essential in comprehensively addressing the various facets of wildlife crime and ensuring a unified front against this global threat. In 2022, as part of the investigations into the illegal transit of rhino horns from South Africa to Laos, transiting through Singapore, INTERPOL organized an Operational Support Team with Singapore to South Africa and facilitated a Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting in 2023. These efforts led to critical information to be shared, ultimately resulting in the prosecution of the offender in Singapore.

Dr Anna Wong, Senior Director of National Parks, Singapore

Thunder Operations are generously funded by:

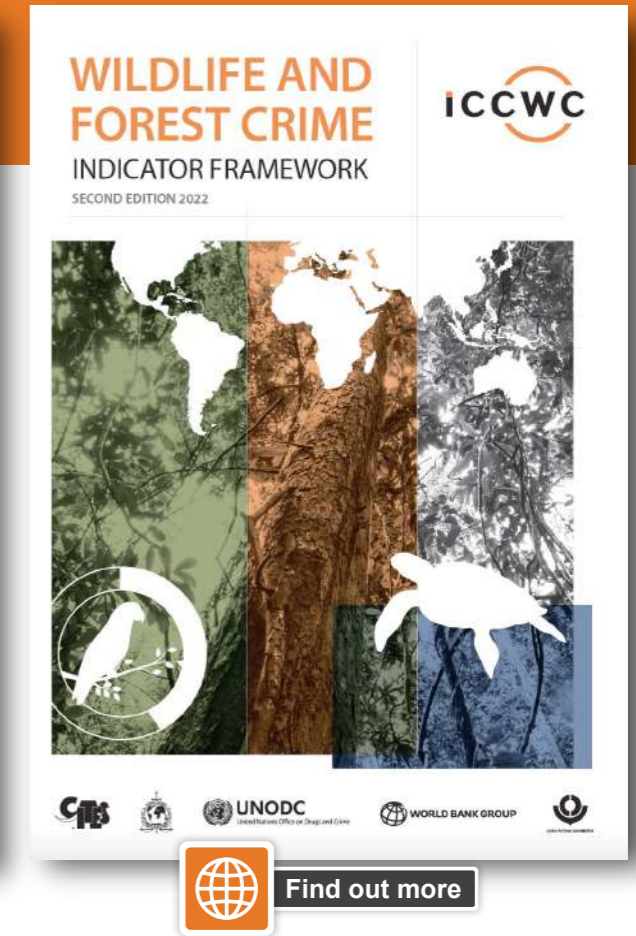
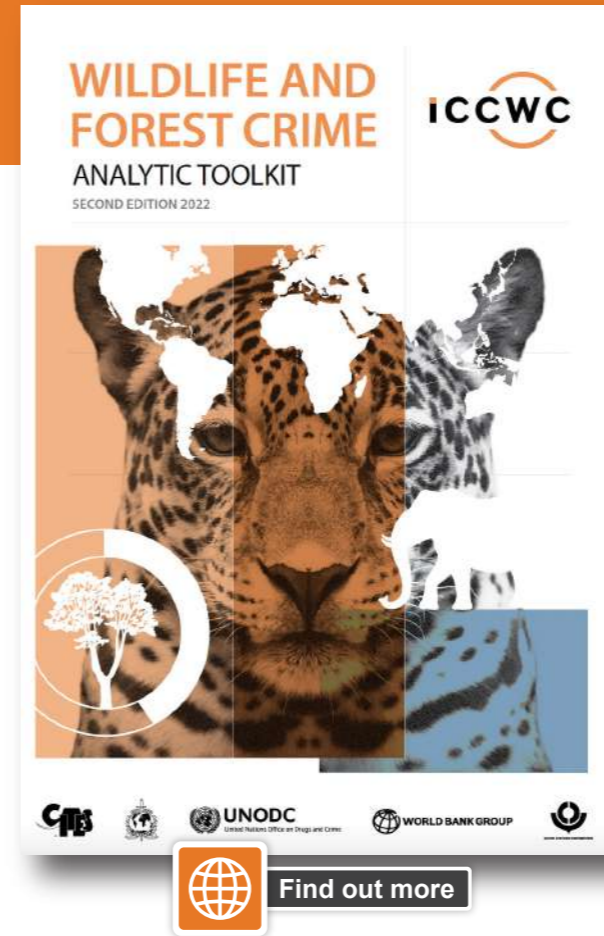


DISMANTLE



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ICCWC Toolkit and Indicator Framework



The ICCWC Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit and Indicator Framework are complementary technical tools designed for use by competent national law enforcement authorities around the world to enable them to assess and measure the effectiveness of criminal justice system responses to wildlife and forest crime and identify technical assistance needs.



Carla Suarez Jurado

Project Coordinator,
UNODC Environment Team
Ecuador

“ We have implemented the ICCWC Toolkit and Indicator Framework in countries across Latin America. Often, it is the first time the relevant agencies come together and are really thinking about what is working and importantly what can be improved regarding national responses to wildlife crime. Participants typically leave the process reinvigorated, with a clear action plan and an understanding of necessary steps for the coming years. ”

During 2023, ICCWC supported countries to address gaps in criminal justice responses to wildlife crime to help dismantle criminal networks. This included the collaboration with countries to evaluate and assess their capacities to address wildlife crime through the utilization of the ICCWC Toolkit, Indicator Framework and Rapid Reference Guides, towards creating a comprehensive strategy to respond to and prevent wildlife crime. Efforts also included working with countries to support them in wildlife investigations and prosecutions, reviewing legal frameworks and supporting the development of national Action Plans.

ICCWC Toolkit and Indicator Framework

2

New ICCWC Toolkit Assessments



- Nigeria
- The Philippines

8

New ICCWC Indicator Framework Assessments



- Brazil
- Ecuador
- Fiji
- Guinea
- Kenya
- Madagascar
- Papua New Guinea
- Thailand

17

Countries supported to implement Toolkit and Indicator Framework recommendations



- Bangladesh
- Bolivia
- Ecuador
- Fiji
- Gabon
- Lao PDR
- Kenya
- Mexico
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Papua New Guinea
- Peru
- Philippines
- Republic of the Congo
- The United Republic of Tanzania
- Uganda
- Viet Nam



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ICCWC TOOLKIT AND INDICATOR FRAMEWORK



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A participant working on the development of a road map during the Indicator Framework Process in Galapagos, Ecuador.

Republic of Guinea

Environmental authorities, CITES management and scientific authorities, the national brigade, police, gendarmerie, INTERPOL, customs, the judiciary and partner NGOs completed the ICCWC Indicator Framework Assessment.

Kenya

An Indicator Framework workshop took place with representatives from key institutions in law enforcement across Kenya. Following ICCWC recommendations, UNODC worked in collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Service on the implementation of the recommendations and development of a recommendations report to be presented to national authorities in 2024.

Synergies with the Global Wildlife Program

Throughout 2023, ICCWC continued to work with the World Bank-led Global Wildlife Program on aligning ICCWC efforts with country GEF investments. The global partnership has expanded to 38 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. The 15 countries that recently joined the GWP under the new GEF-8 funding cycle have been encouraged to make use of ICCWC tools such as the ICCWC Indicator Framework for their project activity development where relevant. There are also opportunities for the new projects to fund implementation of recommendations from Toolkit and Indicator Framework assessments. For example, in the Philippines the new GWP project is planning to embed recommendations from its 2023 ICCWC Toolkit and 2019 ICCWC Indicator Framework assessments in its project design.



Find out more

Nigeria

Toolkit and Indicator Framework assessments took place including meetings and interviews with officers of frontline agencies who play a role in Nigeria's wildlife crime response.

Madagascar

An Indicator Framework workshop identified additional gaps and challenges in the Malagasy response to wildlife and forest crime collected through the ICCWC Toolkit conducted in 2018.

The Philippines

The ICCWC Toolkit Report and Action Plan were presented to national counterparts.

ICCWC recommendations were incorporated into a 10-year action plan for tackling wildlife crimes in legislation in the Philippines.

Voting during the Indicator Framework workshop in Suva, Fiji, involving wildlife, forest and fisheries authorities to assess national responses.

Ecuador - Mainland and Galapagos

“ The ICCWC Indicator Framework is one of the most crucial activities we have undertaken to combat wildlife trafficking because, for the first time, we have brought together all the stakeholders involved when such a crime occurs. We have collaborated with various institutions to develop tools and that enable us to effectively address crimes related to wildlife trafficking in the Galapagos Islands. The Indicator Framework enables us to be prepared and clear on how to respond to crimes affecting wildlife. ”

Danny Rueda
Former Director of the Galapagos National Park, Ecuador

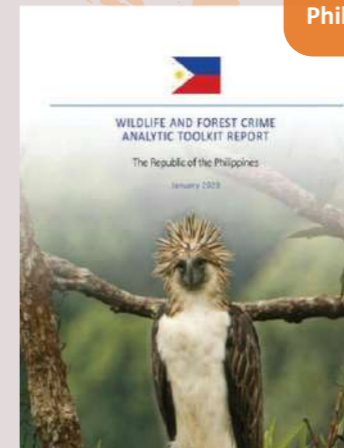


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ICCWC Toolkit in-country assessment team visit to the Nigeria Customs Service Wildlife Seizure Storage Containers, August 2023.



Papua New Guinea

Based on Indicator Framework assessment recommendations, the Conservation and Environment Protection Agency initiated a review of its International Trade (Fauna and Flora) Act 1979 and the Crocodile Trade (Protection) Act 1974, as well as delivered training on species identification and wildlife trafficking for agencies on Papua New Guinea's borders.

Fiji

Based on Indicator Framework assessment recommendations, the Department of Environment created a Wildlife Crime Enforcement Taskforce to develop Standard Operating Procedures for seizures, investigations and prosecutions on wildlife crime.



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Rapid Reference Guides

In 2023, a series of Rapid Reference Guides (RRG) for investigators and prosecutors were developed in partnership with national stakeholders.

RRGs outline the different points to prove and steps required to build strong cases against perpetrators, set out the ancillary powers available to court members and provide guidelines to assist investigators and prosecutors with the drafting of charging documents. The RRGs also facilitate and encourage the exchange of information between investigators and prosecutors to ensure that those investigating are collecting the information required by the prosecution to build a solid case.

15 COUNTRIES SUPPORTED TO DEVELOP RAPID REFERENCE GUIDES
7 COUNTRIES TRAININGS DELIVERED IN
291 LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS TRAINED

Impact in Mozambique

Development of the Rapid Reference Manual (RRM) in Mozambique and the subsequent trainings delivered, showed great impacts in investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating wildlife and forest crime cases and improvement of the timeliness of handling cases (reduction on the length of processes which used to take one or two years from investigation to court, to six months average since the use of the RRM).

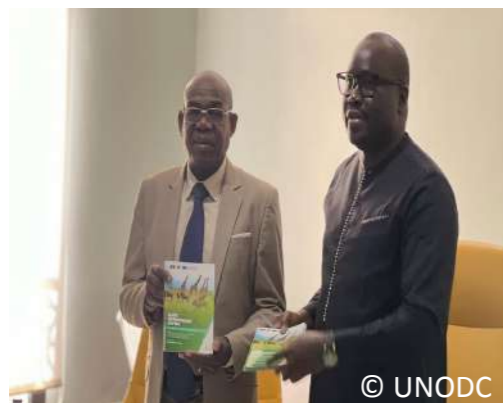


RRG training in Nigeria

RRG workshop in Senegal



RRG training in Cameroon



RRG training in Chad



Over 200 investigators and rangers from Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya Fisheries Service (KEFS) were trained on the Rapid Reference Guide which was delivered across the Coast Conservation Area.



Assane Drame

Regional Coordinator for West and Central Africa, UNODC Environment Team

“By equipping investigators and prosecutors with practical, customized resources, we are empowering them to confront these challenges head-on. Having worked closely with national authorities, I have witnessed firsthand the hurdles they face. The Rapid Reference Guide addresses these challenges by offering a comprehensive overview of judicial tools and best practice. It is an invaluable resource for investigators and prosecutors and I know they are using these guides on a regular basis.”

SUPPORT FOR INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS

Enhancing Capacity of National Authorities

ICCWC worked with national authorities to build wildlife investigation and prosecution capacity. Training topics covered combating transnational organized crime, including the complexity of wildlife trafficking, money laundering and organized crime, corruption, financial disruption methodologies and investigation techniques for wildlife crime. For example, in Cambodia, an advisory task force led by UNODC brought together experts to share intelligence, discuss current investigations and facilitate inter-agency coordination. The program also provided coaching sessions on best practices in advanced investigation techniques. ICCWC also supported an e-learning course on intelligence-led enforcement for environmental crimes. A webi-nar showcasing the self-taught e-learning course on Intelligence-Led Enforcement for Environmental Crimes was presented to countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. During pilot testing, 14 law enforcement officers were certified on this course which was led by INTERPOL.

“*It is thanks to your programme on combating environment and wildlife crimes that we have been able to reach 163 court cases in 2023, a first for the Republic of Congo since we began investigating these crimes.*”

Frederic Odzala Lendouma

Director of Legal Affairs and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Congo, describes the impact of the training in recent years.

National Environmental Security Seminar

Held in Nigeria, this seminar enhanced cooperation between all stakeholders involved in combating wildlife crime and assisted to expand existing investigation networks in Nigerian Police Services. The seminar was led by INTERPOL with ICCWC support.



Nigerian Police Services at the National Environmental Security Seminar.

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Sensitization of Judges

ICCWC plays a vital role in sensitizing judges, providing specialized training, and producing comprehensive training materials to ensure informed and impactful judicial decisions. This is important as raising awareness about wildlife crime is crucial for effective enforcement and judicial processes. For example, the World Bank worked with the Mozambican Supreme Court to develop new training materials and train future trainers while in Kenya, UNODC worked with the judges of the Environment and Land Court to raise awareness of emerging trends in wildlife, forestry, and fisheries crimes. These trainings will benefit judges in penalising wildlife crimes appropriately.

Expert Mentoring

ICCWC provides expert mentorship. Through advisory meetings ongoing guidance on wildlife crime investigation techniques is provided for key law enforcement agencies involved in the prevention, detection, and investigation of high-profile wildlife crimes. In the Philippines for example, mentorship is provided to an advisory group including law enforcement agencies and all CITES Management Authorities. It is expected that this will lead to a more coordinated and unified approach to enforcing regulations and policies.

Development of Suspect's Profiles

While supporting countries around the world with analysis and investigation of wildlife crime cases, ICCWC found capacity gaps among law enforcement officers regarding building profiles of suspects and understanding the use of analytical techniques. As a result, INTERPOL developed a training course aimed at investigators and analysts from police and environmental protection agencies, to share best practice techniques to develop suspect profiles and improve the quality of investigations. The specific objectives of this training were to successfully generate suspect profile reports and to understand how INTERPOL capabilities, including Blue Notices, can support transnational cooperation efforts to disrupt wildlife crime.

Strengthening of the Criminal Justice Capacity to Prevent and Respond to Wildlife and Forest Crime Cases

In Senegal, ICCWC convened 28 representatives from environmental authorities, the judiciary, police, customs, gendarmerie, mining agents, the financial investigation unit and the airport anti-trafficking unit. UNODC facilitated a workshop to exchange on individual responses to wildlife crime along the criminal justice chain which provided participants the opportunity to enhance inter-agency coordination.



FOCUS STORY: ENHANCING WILDLIFE CRIME RESPONSES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

ICCWC works in West & Central Africa, providing capacity-building activities and support to combat wildlife crime. ICCWC's work in the sub-regions is guided by a threat assessment and CITES CoP19 decisions.



163 law enforcement professionals trained

PHASE I

3 regional trainings completed



REGIONAL SUPPORT

Regional trainings focused on front-line capacity building support

PHASE II

5 targeted trainings completed



NATIONAL SUPPORT

Additional regional training and national support for investigators and prosecutors



TARGETED SUPPORT

Development of Rapid Reference Guides (RRGs) and training in legislation, investigation methods & judicial work

Regional Training in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

In November 2023, ICCWC convened a training in Abidjan for wildlife crime investigators, prosecutors and CITES focal points from seven West and Central African countries to discuss ways to enhance cooperation and investigations.

IMPACT

- ✓ Sharing knowledge on lessons learned
- ✓ New investigative skills
- ✓ Networking opportunities across countries

“
These workshops helps us to create knowledge and links between different countries. And that helps us to fight transnational crime. Because wildlife crime is essentially transnational.

Salimata Kone
Director of Wildlife and Energy Resources at the Ministry of Water and Forests, Côte d'Ivoire



WATCH THE VIDEOS TO HEAR TESTIMONIALS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS FROM PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

WHAT'S NEXT?

ICCWC will implement Phase III of support to continue capacity building work in this region, based on needs and requests from countries as well as implementing CITES CoP19 decisions related to West and Central Africa.

Activities are generously funded by:



LOOKING AHEAD



Much has been achieved by Parties across the globe in recent years to combat wildlife crime. Despite many successes, wildlife crime remains a significant threat. It is essential to continue engaging and empowering front-line officers whilst providing countries with the tools, services and technical support they need to combat wildlife crime.

ICCWC will continue to work with Parties through a range of national, regional and global interventions and activities to further strengthen responses to and address wildlife crime. We'll continue to foster international cooperation including through joint investigations, providing long term mentorship to those on the front line and providing valuable training and networking opportunities for countries around the world.

After having completed multiple Toolkit and Indicator Framework assessments over the last decade, the Consortium will increasingly focus on implementing recommendations resulting from this work and monitoring progress.

Looking ahead, the ICCWC Vision 2030 and its associated Strategic Action Plans demonstrate the Consortium's commitment to continue to work closely with countries to further strengthen responses and combat wildlife crime, by working collectively and in a coordinated manner. Efforts must increasingly focus on investigations, prosecutions and adjudications. This is embraced by the ICCWC Vision 2030 which focuses on strengthening wildlife authorities, police, customs, and mobilizing entire criminal justice systems to ensure that the criminals involved in wildlife crime are brought to justice and the organized crime groups they belong to are disrupted.



Acknowledgements

Together Against Wildlife Crime

ICCWC partners acknowledge and extend gratitude to actors from across the criminal justice system around the world who work tirelessly every day to prevent, detect investigate and prosecute wildlife crime cases and bring the perpetrators involved to justice. Progress made over the past few years would not have been possible without their tireless efforts.

All ICCWC activities are externally funded and dependent on strong donor support. We thank the European Union, France, Germany, Monaco, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America for their generous support to our vital work under the ICCWC Strategic Programme which is now drawing to a close. We also thank the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank for the funding provided via the Global Wildlife Program to support the development of the ICCWC Vision 2030. The European Union, Monaco, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America are also thanked for their continued support and contributions towards the ICCWC Vision 2030.

It would be an impossible task to acknowledge the many countries and governmental authorities, intergovernmental partner organizations, civil society organizations, research institutions and others that have collaborated with ICCWC in 2023, many of which are mentioned throughout the report. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one for their invaluable support, cooperation and contributions.



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TOGETHER AGAINST
WILDLIFE CRIME

