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United For Wildlife Hosts Conference On Combatting Illegal Wildlife Trade In Southern Africa

by ADMIN

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- The Royal Foundation and British High Commission co-hosted a United for Wildlife conference in Botswana to build networks and share knowledge on the illegal wildlife trade
- Representatives joined from Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, SouthAfrica, Zambia and Zimbabwe

The Royal Foundation’s United for Wildlife and The British High Commission in Gaborone co-hosted a United for Wildlife conference in Kasane, Botswana. Supported by Zambesia Conservation Alliance, the event brought together leaders from the finance, transport, government, law enforcement and conservation organisations from the region with a common purpose of addressing Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) in Southern Africa.

The UK government presented new research on the impact of COVID-19 on the illegal wildlife trade and the role of gender in illicit trafficking of wildlife products. A new financial sector toolkit developed by the UK government in partnership with WWF and Themis was launched at the event. The toolkit is a free resource for the financial sector to support their work on combatting illicit finance flows linked to wildlife trafficking and can be accessed online.

The conference marked the first meeting of the South African Regional Chapter, providing an opportunity to build on the efforts of United for Wildlife's Southern Africa Chapter, sharing best practices in combatting IWT, while also discussing potential frameworks to assist future efforts in the region. The event comes as United for Wildlife (UfW) partners strengthen the regional response to the illegal wildlife trade, expanding the successfully established South Africa Regional Chapter to encompass more partners across Southern Africa. Representatives from across the region joined this Chapter for the first time, including Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They will join this growing network to further enhance the regional response to the illegal wildlife trade.

Prince William founded United for Wildlife with The Royal Foundation to raise awareness of this serious and organised crime and bring motivated leaders across business, law enforcement and charities together to ensure the response is greater than conservationists alone. This Regional Chapter will continue to work with UfW's international Financial and Transport Taskforces to share information and resources, strengthen existing partnerships and better respond to support local priorities.

Countries all over the world are making a collective effort to tackle the issue and the regional expansion of the Taskforces is key to this success. There are currently five regional chapters, including Southern Africa, East Africa, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia and Australasia, and the Middle East and North Africa.

David Fein, Chairman of the United for Wildlife Financial Taskforce, said: "The illegal wildlife trade is a serious organised crime carried out by ruthless cross-border criminal networks. It robs communities today of their future sources of income – it must be met with a united and global response. By convening and working collaboratively with the transport and finance sectors, building key partnerships with NGOs, and sharing information and best practices across the sectors, we will disrupt this criminal network."

Sian Price, British High Commissioner to Botswana and Special Representative to SADC, said: "The UK as a nation is passionate about combatting the illegal wildlife trade. Worth £23bn annually, the illegal wildlife trade knows no borders. Financial crime is at the heart of the illicit trade. Air and shipping routes facilitate the movement of illegal products from Africa to Asia. We cannot combat the illegal wildlife trade without working regionally, and engaging the finance and transport sectors. This conference is a milestone in bringing senior leaders from finance and transport industries across Southern Africa together to disrupt wildlife trafficking."

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