



Toolkit to fight wildlife crime

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A new project was launched last week that will assist Namibia in its efforts to fight wildlife crime.

The International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC) Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit was launched by environment minister Pohamba Shifeta last week at a workshop organised by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The project provides the technical resources to assist governments in conducting a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a country's response to wildlife crime. The result is a report that includes analyses and findings, along with recommendations on how to improve a country's response to wildlife crime.

This is an innovative project that has been implemented in several countries with excellent results. The toolkit provides a sound evidence base to guide efforts to combat wildlife and environmental crimes.

Shifeta said there are unprecedented levels of elephant and rhino poaching, as well as the illegal harvesting of timber and uncontrolled logging across Africa, and Namibia is no exception. He said these threaten the future of fauna and flora, and entire ecosystems. He said this situation demands a review and update of Namibia's current strategies and measures to curb illegal hunting and harvesting of timber. "We welcome the Wildlife and Forest Crime Analytic Toolkit, and we would want to understand how this toolkit works before we can consider implementing it, especially in strengthening our local criminal justice system. We also need well-coordinated wildlife crime systems at national, regional and international levels," said Shifeta.

US ambassador to Namibia Lisa Johnson said Namibia is a model for conservation in the region and its community-based conservation, rhino custodian programme, and other collaborative efforts have had great success in combating poaching in recent years.

According to her, wildlife crime is pushing some of the world's most iconic species toward extinction, while driving a lucrative criminal industry that fuels instability in countries around the world.

She said wildlife crime is a critical threat to economic development and undermines security. "When we lose wildlife and security as a result of poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, we also lose tools that are essential to fight poverty." Johnson said wildlife is an important cultural and economic asset in Namibia contributing significantly to the tourism sector and sustaining the livelihoods of many people. She said the American government is committed to working with Namibia to help stop poaching and wildlife trafficking, both within Namibia and across international boundaries. To that end, the US government is currently funding conservation-related projects in Namibia valued at more than N\$276 million. These projects include community-based work to ensure the value of wildlife for everyone, equipment for anti-poaching efforts, and training courses for those involved in addressing wildlife crime. "Wildlife crime is a form of serious, transnational organised crime. Concerted international cooperation is needed to dismantle the networks that perpetrate it. Collaborative efforts among governments, international and non-governmental organisations, and donors must be well coordinated to properly address wildlife and forest crime."

According to Johnson the US has a strong partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, or UNODC, around the world.



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TACKLE IT HEAD-ON: A new project has been launched that will assist Namibia to fight wildlife crime. Photo FILE

"We are supporting UNODC's work in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and are now co-funded with the EU – specifically in Namibia. I am pleased that the US government is able to fund the toolkit for Namibia, while the EU is funding the Indicator Framework. The project will involve robust collaboration among several government ministries, with the result benefitting the entire country." She said the most effective way to combat wildlife crime is for everyone to work together."

Johnson also commended Namibia for its commitment in working with UNODC and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime to implement the toolkit.