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FIC wildlife crime

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FIC VITAL IN FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED WILDLIFE CRIMES

Working with law enforcement agencies

The report found that Namibia demonstrated a good understanding of money laundering threats, which originate from domestic rather than foreign sources.

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The Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) plays a vital role in countering organised wildlife crime in Namibia.

With a renewed spike in rhino poaching in 2022, the FIC's role underlines the extent to which rhino poaching is driven by organised criminal gangs and the extensive criminal networks that facilitate horn trafficking.

This is according to the National Namibia Wildlife Protection Report for 2022, which found that poaching and trafficking of live plants also appear to be coordinated via well-organised online platforms and linkages that enable products to be offered to potential markets at a global scale.

It said this enables important insights into market dynamics, highlighting how criminals operate via fake accounts and identities.

"Investigations into rhino crimes and plant trafficking are focusing on dismantling entire criminal networks rather than simply arresting individual suspects," the report noted.

"The use of wide-ranging surveillance and all available technologies is vital in enabling the detection of criminal activities, the gathering of evidence, arrests and prosecutions. The use of the Proceeds of Organised Crime Act (POCA) charges against criminal gangs, racketeering activities and money laundering is central to convictions with appropriate penalties."

Tracing the money

The FIC is guided by the Financial Intelligence Act and is mandated to provide assistance in combatting money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation activities.

"Organised wildlife crimes such as rhino crimes and other poaching and trafficking of high-value wildlife products rely heavily on money laundering."

The report explained that illegal income is transferred into illegal financial systems, with the origins of the illicit funds concealed through multiple financial transactions.

The illicit funds are then integrated into the legal economy through pay-outs via legitimate entities.

The FIC is able to detect potential cases of money laundering and other financial crimes by evaluating financial transaction information from various financial institutions and related entities.

Information shared

The report further explained that financial intelligence on criminal activities is shared with law enforcement agencies such as the police and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

"As the focal point for high-value species crimes, the Blue Rhino Task Team (BRTT) actively liaises with the FIC and the Office of the Prosecutor General during the investigation of cases that may involve financial crimes," the report underlined.

In recent years, the FIC has processed dozens of requests from the police for information related to wildlife crimes, which provided critical information to prosecute suspects.

"This has led to some money-laundering convictions related to controlled wildlife products."

Laundering proceeds of crime

According to the report, detailed investigations proving the illicit origin of funds can also enable the recovery of proceeds from wildlife crimes.

The FIC also identifies and catalogues trends and typologies, specific methods used for financial crimes, and undertakes risk assessments of criminal sectors.

Moreover, research findings are published as detailed reports to guide countermeasures by mandated agencies.

Namibia's effectiveness in countering money laundering is periodically assessed by the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), with findings published in mutual evaluation reports. The most recent report on Namibia was published in 2022.

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