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CRIME: Illegal logging forms part of nature crimes. Photo: FILE

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# NATURE CRIME HAS BECOME A TRILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Global network aims to disrupt criminal enterprises

**The launch of the Nature Crime Alliance spotlights the urgency of addressing environmental crimes.**

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One of the largest illicit economies in the world, nature crime is closely linked to terrorism, corruption, human rights abuses, financial crime and other threats to peace and security.

A new global initiative that is building bridges across disciplinary, geographic, and jurisdictional domains in the fight against nature crime has officially been launched.

The Nature Crime Alliance is a global, multi-sector network that raises political will, mobilises financial commitment, and bolsters operational capacity to fight nature crime and the international criminal activities with which it converges.

According to the Nature Crime Alliance, these crimes include criminal forms of logging, mining, fishing, wildlife trade, and land conversion.

The crimes moreover frequently converge with each other and other forms of international criminal activity.

"Globally, it is estimated that nature crime has become the largest financial driver of terrorism and other forms of conflict, generating US\$110 to US\$281 billion in annual criminal proceeds with an indirect impact of US\$1 to US\$2 trillion."

## Working together

The Alliance's inclusive approach also welcomes the involvement of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Interpol, along with frontline defenders, civil society organisations, and private sector representatives, underscoring the significance of collaborative multi-sectoral action.

The UNODC said that, recognising the urgency and complexity, the Nature Crime Alliance emerges as a crucial network that seeks to enhance collaboration between organisations fighting nature crime.

Hosted by the World Resources Institute (WRI), the alliance aims to mobilise governments and other non-state actors to scale up efforts to disrupt the criminal networks perpetrating these crimes globally.

The alliance was officially launched at the Global Environmental Facility in Vancouver, which was also attended by Namibia's environment minister, Pohamba Shifeta.

"Organised crime groups are desecrating nature's fragile ecosystems by engaging in wildlife trafficking, illegal mining, waste trafficking, and other illicit activities. It's time for global action to end the criminal exploitation and degradation of nature for financial gain," said Ghada Waly, executive director of UNODC.

"Through our global field presence and long-standing experience in delivering technical assistance and capacity-building support, UNODC can provide law enforcement with the tools and expertise to tackle the criminal networks behind these crimes and preserve our planet for future generations."

#### Stewards of nature

Ani Dasgupta, president and CEO of the World Resources Institute (WRI), said complex global challenges such as nature crime cannot be solved in isolation. The Nature Crime Alliance seeks to drive greater collaboration across different sectors and disciplines to help eradicate crimes against people and the planet.

"The persistent misconception of Indigenous Peoples as perpetrators of nature crime needs to change towards building partnerships with these communities as stewards of nature," said Joan Carling, executive director, Indigenous Peoples Rights International.

"The importance of the Nature Crime Alliance for us is that it respects Indigenous Peoples' rights, recognising the value of traditional knowledge and skills in developing conservation measures and strategies that strengthen law enforcement and monitoring."

Yulia Stange, director of the Nature Crime Alliance, added that for too long crimes against nature and the impacts these have on people have been ignored, especially on the most vulnerable and the planet.

"There has never been a more urgent need for the Nature Crime Alliance, which is working across intergovernmental treaties, agreements, and organisations to prevent, disrupt, and prosecute these crimes to the fullest."