



SUCCESS: Operation Thunder 2023 yielded impressive results with over 2 000 seizures of wild animals and plants and 500 arrests. Photo: FILE

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CRIME (/CRIME)

ICCWC HIGHLIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS IN COMBATING WILDLIFE CRIME

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The International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC) launched its annual report for 2023, highlighting the successes and achievements of countries it supports in combating wildlife and forest crime, of which Namibia is one.

The consortium uses targeted and evidence-based approaches to strengthen criminal justice systems and provide coordinated support to enhance responses to wildlife crime.

This includes technical assistance, intelligence-led global operations, capacity-building, financial investigations training, anti-corruption risk assessments and support to mobilise forensic science in the fight against wildlife crime.

"Wildlife crime continues to be a global epidemic causing serious destruction to nature, communities, public health and global security," Ivonne Higuero, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) secretary-general, said.

"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."

According to the report, in 2023, a total of 37 wildlife crime investigations were supported by a wildlife DNA laboratory in Uganda.

The laboratory became operational in 2022 with support from ICCWC and in partnership with TRACE Forensics Network and the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA). The laboratory has been essential in supporting wildlife crime cases in Uganda and other African countries, yielding significant results.

The report further said that Operation Thunder 2023 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.

Support was provided to 17 countries, including Namibia, in 2023 to implement the recommendations resulting from assessments using the crime analytic toolkit and the ICCWC indicator framework for combating wildlife and forest crime.

The report said the ICCWC analysis allowed many countries to create baselines against which progress can be measured and to create tailored strategies and action plans to combat wildlife crime.

“Over the last decade, ICCWC has supported countries to complete multiple toolkit and indicator framework assessments and now the consortium will increasingly focus on implementing recommendations resulting from this work along with monitoring progress,” it said.

In 2023, the consortium continued its capacity-building work, assisting countries in combating corruption, addressing wildlife crime linked to the internet, and training over 400 professionals in addressing financial crime and money laundering.



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