

# Judges need training in handling wildlife crimes – Minister



Minister of Environment, Balarabe Lawal

The Minister of Environment, Balarabe Lawal, says there is a need for capacity building in the judiciary for effective prosecution of wildlife crimes.

The minister noted that Nigerian wildlife was being threatened by poachers, with some wild animals, including elephants, facing extinction threats.

Lawal said this when he appeared as a guest on an episode of *Unfiltered: The Big Interview*, monitored by our correspondent.

He said, “The forest is now becoming homes for criminals, insurgents and poachers who kill endangered animals like elephants. We’re trying to address the issue of poaching in the forest. We get a lot of support from international organisations. They are concerned with our judicial system, teaching them how to judge and prosecute forest and wildlife crimes. Environmental crimes such as killing animals are a thing. We have about 55 elephants, and two were killed; they are very rare in the West African sub-region.”

The minister called for a collaboration among various ministries and their heads to improve environmental stability and prevent disasters and destruction.

During the interview, Lawal expressed he is focused on addressing environmental issues such as the lack of sufficient forest covers, flood, pollution, and land degradation, amongst others, in collaboration with other ministries.

“Nigeria is one of the countries with the least forest cover. We have less than 10% of forest cover, so we are almost in a crisis. The forest has now become a hibernation ground for bandits and criminals as you find out that most of the attacks and kidnappings come from the forest. They come out and attack people on the roads and in houses and take them back to the forests for ransoms. This is an issue we’re trying to address.

“Mr President is very keen on that because he asked three of us, myself, the Minister of Solid Minerals and the Minister of Blue Economy, to address it because they have problems of coastal piracy, mining bandits that attack mining areas and also illegal miners in Oyo, Zamfara, Nassarawa and Kaduna states.”