

United for Wildlife strengthens fight against the illegal wildlife trade by adding a West Africa Chapter to its global network



News

24/07/2024

- Share



United for Wildlife has established landmark agreements with one of Nigeria's leading law enforcement agencies as well as the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, as part of the organisation's work to build a regional network to combat the Illegal Wildlife Trade in West Africa.

Together, the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission (ICPC) and United for Wildlife are committing to work together on a number of fronts; developing training and education in the region in relation to illegal wildlife trade, exchanging information of operational value in order to identify and disrupt wildlife trafficking and related financial crimes, and facilitating the provision of expertise and support of United for Wildlife's global network to those working in illegal wildlife trade in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) was the first of its kind in the West Africa region to provide dedicated resources for financial intelligence analysis related to crimes against the natural environment. Nigeria's FIU has endorsed United for Wildlife's statement of principles for a multilateral approach to combating illegal wildlife trade in order to demonstrate continued commitment to the cause.

These agreements have been established in the same week that over 20 organisations gathered at a special conference hosted by United for Wildlife in Lagos marking the establishment of a new West Africa chapter for United for Wildlife's Financial and Transport taskforce, bringing together key stakeholders in the region from the finance and transport sectors, NGOs law enforcement and government to identify, report and prevent wildlife trafficking.

Partners Lexis Nexis Risk Solutions and the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) in collaboration with Nigerian authorities hosted complimentary events at the conference intended to unite the efforts of public and private sector organisations to tackle financial crimes related to the illegal wildlife trade.

United for Wildlife was delighted to welcome leading advocate for sustainable development and improved funding for conservation efforts in Nigeria, the Honourable Terseer Ugbor, Member of the House of Representatives from Benue State, Nigeria and Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Environment to the conference. The honourable member sponsored the landmark legislation called the Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill, 2024, to ensure that Nigeria's wildlife is protected against over-exploitation, degradation and the illegal trade.

-Dr Muse Aliyu (SAN), Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences commission (ICPC)

“Today marks a significant milestone at the historic West Africa Chapter launch and as we sign an MoU with United for Wildlife. This partnership underscores the crucial need for collective action in combatting this threat. With all hands-on-deck, we can make a real impact in protecting our precious wildlife. I and the ICPC are proud to be associated with United for Wildlife and our common interests. Rest assured of my and the ICPC's unwavering support in this vital endeavor.”

Apapa Port has increasingly been targeted by criminal networks as an exit route for illegal wildlife leaving the continent. Nigeria showed a collective intent to tackle this issue, reflected in comments from Nigeria Customs, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency.

The West Africa Chapter is the ninth United for Wildlife regional chapter to launch, following East Africa, Southern Africa, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia and Australasia, Middle East and North Africa, North America, and Latin America, the Caribbean and India.

The event highlighted the wildlife trafficking threats and movement corridors, raising awareness of the challenges that the region faces and bringing together United for Wildlife members to establish a unified strategy to tackling wildlife crime.

Through sharing best practices in combatting illegal wildlife trade and setting out a framework for a unified approach to future conservation efforts in the region, the event lays the groundwork for public-private partnerships that will preserve Nigeria's wildlife for future generations.

The global illegal wildlife trade is worth up to \$20 billion annually and is run by highly organised criminal networks associated with violent crime, corruption, and other forms of trafficking. Defeating it requires a global, organised response, with root and branch intelligence sharing between front-line conservationists all the way up to national government and international organisations.

By working with key stakeholders in Nigeria, from the finance and transport sectors, NGOs, law enforcement and government, United for Wildlife will convene cross-sector stakeholders and support local leadership in tackling wildlife crime.

Founded by Prince William and The Royal Foundation in 2013 in response to the devastating impact of the illegal wildlife trade, United for Wildlife aims to make it impossible for traffickers to

transport, finance or profit from wildlife trafficking. Its uniquely collaborative approach builds networks across the private, public and conservation sectors to stop the trafficking of wildlife products.

Since 2016, the United for Wildlife Transport and Finance Taskforces have grown to 300 members and more than 140 partners across the globe. The United for Wildlife network has contributed to over 650 law enforcement cases, nearly 600 arrests, over 350 seizures of wildlife products, and has trained more than 120,000 people. The network spans the globe – from Southeast Asia to South America, Europe to East Africa – increasing deterrents across the entire chain of demand and supply.