

# NEWS DAY

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## Need for collaborative efforts in combating illicit wildlife trade: Activists

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March 4, 2022

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ZIMPARKS

## **BY LORRAINE MUROMO**

THE Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (Zela) has called on key stakeholders, including the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks), to collaborate in combating illegal trade and smuggling of wildlife products.

The call coincided with the World Wildlife Day commemorations held yesterday.

Wildlife trafficking in Africa is mainly rife in politically unstable countries and where there is widespread breakdown of law and order.

In a statement yesterday, Zela said there was need for crafting of policies to curb corruption that is boosting trafficking in wildlife in the region and continent.

“It is imperative to reverse the fate of the most critically endangered species, to support the restoration of their habitats and ecosystems and to promote their sustainable use by humanity. Therefore, there is need for the government to address corruption and discourage it at all costs. Corruption is seen as one of the factors enabling illicit wildlife trafficking,” the environmental lawyers said.

“Corruption may facilitate many of the crimes along the wildlife trade route, from poaching, to trafficking including bribery of customs officials, illegal payments to issue export certificates, to bribery of police officers and prosecutors to avoid investigations; payment to manipulate court decisions.

“If not addressed, corruption and weak regulatory frameworks may offer several opportunities to criminal organisations to launder the proceeds of crime.”

Zela said as a result of human action, over 8 400 species of wildlife, flora and fauna were now endangered.

“Therefore, urgent action is needed to reduce the intensity of drivers of biodiversity loss. Without such action, there will be further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction.”

- ***Follow Lorraine on Twitter@RMuromo***