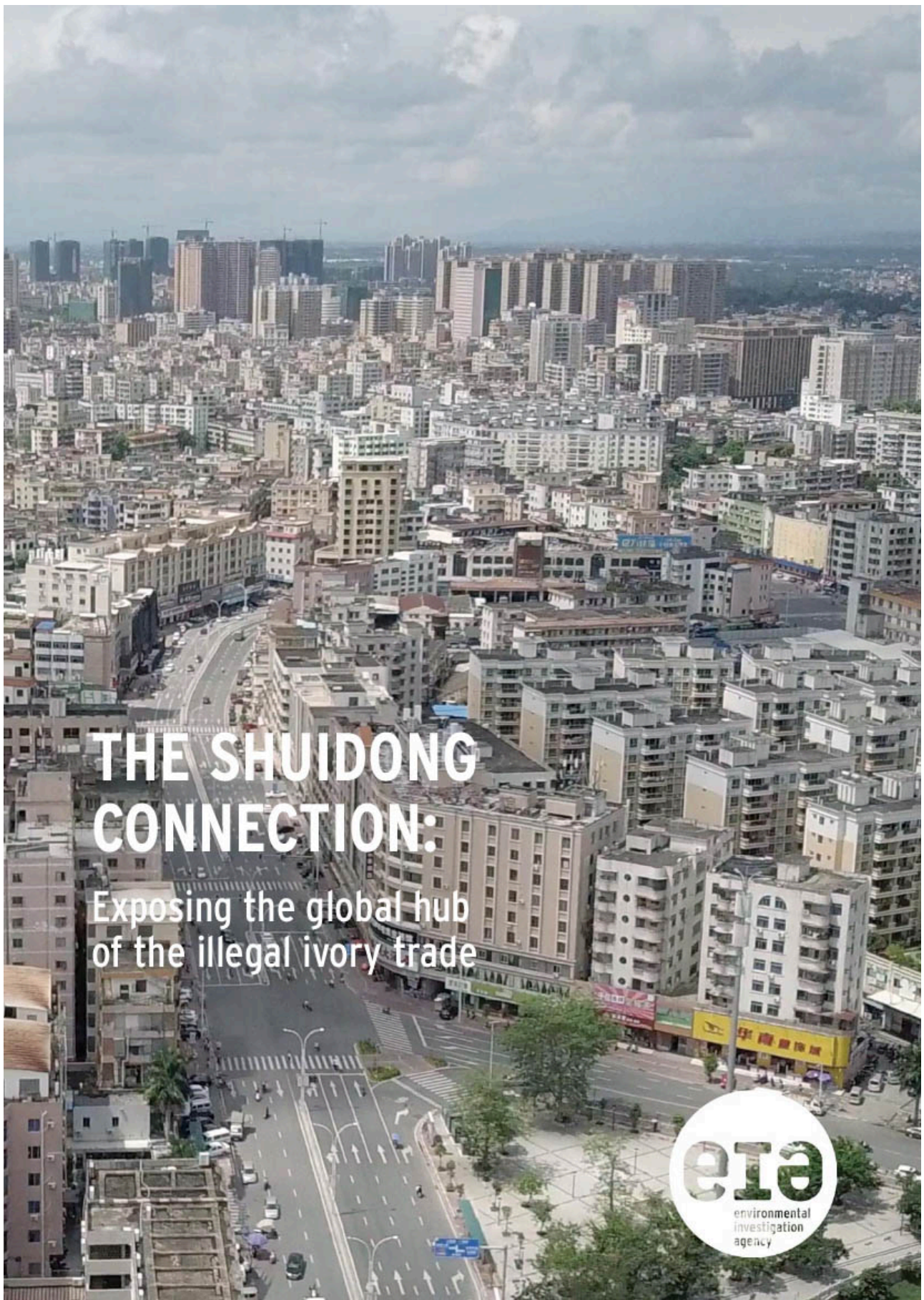


# **China Customs makes a new arrest as it continues to uproot the Shuidong syndicate exposed by EIA**

**Following eight years spent on the run after EIA exposed him as one of China's major illegal wildlife traffickers, another key player in the notorious Shuidong ivory smuggling syndicate is finally to face justice.**



Zhanjiang Customs of China announced on 17 May that the individual – named only as Huang in the official statement– had been [arrested and repatriated from Mozambique](#).

EIA commends China Customs for its commitment to criminal justice and we congratulate it on this latest success.



The Shuidong ivory smuggling network was first exposed by EIA in 2017, following our three-year investigation tracing the syndicate's operations in Tanzania and Mozambique.

The syndicate came from Shuidong, in Guangdong province, China. At the time, EIA shared information with the China Customs Anti-Smuggling Bureau (ASB) which then [took action](#) to dismantle one of the most prolific illegal wildlife networks operating in Africa and China.

The ASB conducted comprehensive financial investigations and identified a network of at least 26 individuals.

EIA investigated and subsequently shared information with the ASB about Wang Kangwen, who was convicted as one of the principal criminals funding and coordinating the smuggling of more than 8.4 tonnes of ivory and 796kg pangolin scales from Tanzania and Mozambique to China.

Although only a small portion of the smuggled ivory was ever seized, the detailed evidence ASB gathered successfully brought the network to justice for the full scale of its crimes.

In total, at least 21 individuals have so far been sentenced for their involvement, with penalties ranging from three to 15 years in prison and confiscation of assets.



Three key ivory traffickers in the Shuidong syndicate identified by EIA's undercover investigations in 2016 – Wang is on the right

The investigation and prosecution of the Shuidong network showcases ASB's exemplary practise of [following the money](#) to track down the entire trafficking chain all the way from those funding the crime and those sent out to buy and ship the ivory and pangolin scales to the complicit customs clearing agents and ivory consumers.

Huang's arrest is also proof of the importance of long-term, effective international collaboration in combatting transnational organised environmental crime. Although the first seizure and arrests were

made back in 2017, to this day ASB continues its efforts to uproot the entire network and bring the criminals at large to justice.

According to verdicts in the cases of Wang Kangwen and others, China Customs used leads from our investigation to notify Malaysia Customs, which led to the seizure of 13 tonnes of pangolin scales and 3.2 tonnes of ivory in Malaysia, resulting in further arrests.

Through INTERPOL Red Notices and collaboration with law enforcement agencies in Tanzania, Nigeria and Mozambique, China Customs was able to arrest and repatriate four key network members for trial.

Despite the welcome news of Huang's arrest, EIA continues to sound the alarm of ongoing poaching and ivory trafficking, which remain a key threat to the survival of Africa's elephants.



Huang with the Zhangjiang ASB following his repatriation (c) China Zhanjiang Customs

In the past two years alone, approximately 25 tonnes of ivory have been seized. The majority of this came from eight large-scale seizures which took place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zambia – evidence of ongoing organised criminal activity.

Worryingly, questions remain about the sourcing of ivory appearing in recent seizures, with the latest [UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report](#) (2024) drawing attention to the leakage of official ivory stockpiles into the illegal trade and the underlying challenge of corruption.

EIA remains [concerned](#) that some Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries have repeatedly supported the resumption of commercial international ivory trade, despite ongoing global efforts to reduce demand for ivory and to close domestic markets.

With CITES CoP20 due to be held in Uzbekistan this November, we call for countries to remain vigilant and commit to ending the commercial trade of ivory.