

**Statement of
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Subcommittees on African Affairs and East Asian and Pacific Affairs
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Introduction

Good afternoon Chairman Coons, Chairman Cardin, Ranking Member Flake, Ranking Member Rubio and other Members of the African Affairs and East Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittees of the Committee on Foreign Relations. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today alongside my colleagues, Deputy Assistant Secretary Darby, Director Ashe, and Assistant Administrator Postel.

We are here today because we share an understanding that the dramatic escalation in wildlife trafficking is something that affects us all. We know that the illicit trade in wildlife is decimating the populations of the world's iconic species, particularly elephants and rhinos. The heavy toll that wildlife trafficking is taking is bringing some species to the brink of extinction. In 2012 alone an estimated 22,000 African elephants were killed for their ivory. Even starker is the decimation of forest elephant populations in Central Africa which have declined by approximately two-thirds between 2002 and 2012.

This illegal trade has devastating impacts: it threatens security, undermines the rule of law, fuels corruption, hinders sustainable economic development, and contributes to the spread of disease.

In spite of these depressing facts the good news is that the international community is coming together in an unprecedented way to combat this pernicious trade.

Shared understanding and commitment, along with the efforts of governments, the international community, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, corporations, civil society, and individuals are critical for collective action to this evolving transnational threat.

Secretary Kerry has long championed efforts to combat wildlife trafficking. As Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he held hearings on the subject. In his role as Secretary of State, he has called on leaders everywhere to step up and meet the challenge of rooting out the corruption, graft, and complicity in the system that threatens all of us.

National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking

President Obama's July 1, 2013, Executive Order created the Presidential Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking and called for development of a *National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking*. The strategy was released on February 11, 2014 and reflects the analysis and contributions from around the Federal government, led by the Task Force Co-chairs, the Departments of State, Interior and Justice. The Executive Order also established an Advisory Council comprising former U.S. Government officials, NGO representatives, the private sector, and law enforcement experts. The Council provided input into the development of the National Strategy and continues to provide valuable input and support as we focus on next steps for implementation.

As President Obama directed, the National Strategy describes a “whole of government” approach to tackle this growing threat, identifying priority areas for interagency coordination, with the objectives of harnessing and strategically applying the full breadth of federal resources. It sets three strategic priorities:

- Strengthening domestic and global enforcement, including assessing the related laws, regulations, and enforcement tools;
- Reducing demand for illegally traded wildlife at home and abroad; and,

- Building international cooperation and public-private partnerships to combat illegal wildlife poaching and trade.

Strengthening Domestic and Global Enforcement

The first of these strategic priorities is **strengthening domestic and global enforcement**. This includes prioritizing wildlife trafficking enforcement domestically, maximizing the use of tools available under U.S. law, and working with foreign governments and other partners to enhance the capacity of other countries to fight wildlife trafficking.

We are increasingly concerned with links to terrorists and rogue military personnel. Like many illicit activities, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these actors are involved in wildlife trafficking. We believe, however, that the Lord's Resistance Army, the Janjaweed, and al-Shabaab have been at least partly involved. There is evidence that some insurgent groups are directly involved in poaching or trafficking, who then trade wildlife products for weapons or safe haven. We believe that, at a minimum, they are likely sharing some of the same facilitators – such as corrupt customs and border officials, money launderers, and supply chains.

We still have much to learn about the full extent of the relationship between suspected terrorist financing and wildlife trafficking. One of the goals of our assistance efforts is to promote greater information sharing and coordination within and among governments, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, conservation groups and other actors working in this area.

The United States sent a strong message that we will not tolerate illicit trade in ivory when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service performed an “Ivory Crush” in November that destroyed nearly six tons of seized or forfeited African and Asian elephant ivory (including full tusks, carved tusks, and smaller carvings and other objects). Now many other countries are following suit, including recent destructions in China, France, Belgium and Chad, and we have urged still others to consider taking similar actions. In January, Hong Kong announced its plans to destroy its stockpile of confiscated ivory and we were pleased to see that destruction began just this past Thursday. Additionally, other countries are

considering destructions of their respective stockpiles of confiscated wildlife products. We are encouraging them to pursue these actions.

The same day that the President released the National Strategy, the U.S. also announced an effort to close existing legal loopholes to achieve a near total ban on the commercial trade of ivory in the United States, with limited exceptions. This has given us the opportunity to lead by example, as we encourage other countries to enact their own bans on the commercial ivory trade.

For the last decade the State Department has partnered with other U.S. Government agencies to stand up regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs) to tackle wildlife trafficking. The State Department and USAID are supporting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ASEAN-WEN, the South Asia WEN, the Central America WEN, the Horn of Africa WEN, and other emerging WENs around the world, including efforts in Central and Southern Africa and South America. Last October we funded a workshop, hosted by the Government of Botswana in Gaborone, which laid the groundwork for the Wildlife Enforcement Network for Southern Africa (WENSA). In March 2013, we worked to strengthen enforcement and existing partnerships by hosting at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of Parties the First Global Meeting of the Wildlife Enforcement Networks. Our goal is to support the creation of a global network of regional wildlife enforcement networks.

The Department of State has long worked with foreign governments to enhance their capacity to fight wildlife trafficking, as well as within international fora and through our bilateral relationships to persuade our global partners to treat wildlife trafficking seriously. We will continue working with our interagency partners to build law enforcement and criminal justice capacity and cooperation globally, with the aim of strengthening policies and legislative frameworks and developing capacities to prosecute and adjudicate crimes related to wildlife trafficking.

Reducing Demand for Illegally Traded Wildlife

Second, the National Strategy focuses on **demand reduction, at home and abroad**. Going forward, the United States will work with existing and new partners to communicate through public outreach and education activities, in the United States and abroad, the negative impacts of wildlife trafficking. As we've already discussed, the impacts are vast, causing irreparable harm to the species themselves, the broader environment, security, food supplies, governance, livelihoods, and human health. We hope by educating consumers, we can alter their harmful purchasing patterns.

Addressing demand is a complex and long-term issue, which depends in part on the species in question. It is not enough to increase public awareness. In order to end wildlife trafficking, the buying must stop. We collaborated a few years ago with the NGO community to sponsor public service announcements with conservationist Jane Goodall and actor Harrison Ford. We continue to work closely with the NGOs, many of whom have ongoing public outreach campaigns, as well as the private sector, including airlines, cruise ships, hotels, and the antique sector. We are in the initial stages of working with governmental and non-governmental colleagues to devise a more comprehensive demand reduction strategy that draws on the respective strengths of each sector. On World Wildlife Day, I hosted a listening session with a group of international NGOs on strategies to reduce demand for illegally traded wildlife, hearing about their international efforts – the successes and lessons learned, as well as the challenges inherent in measuring results. We will continue to engage the NGOs, private sector and to seek input from the Advisory Council as we go forward in implementing this section of the Strategy.

Building International Cooperation and Public-Private Partnerships

Third, the National Strategy seeks to **build international cooperation and public-private partnerships** to combat poaching and the illegal trade in wildlife. We hope to build on our existing work in the international arena to further strengthen the implementation of international agreements. We will seek new partnerships and strengthen existing ones.

Multilateral Efforts

We have advocated for countries to work together to combat wildlife trafficking in a number of multilateral fora, including Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, and the UN General Assembly. We have also worked with our mission to the U.N. to secure the inclusion of language to address wildlife trafficking in two Security Council Resolutions, adopted in January 2014, sanctioning African armed groups. We have also pressed multilateral institutions including the African Union, the African Development Bank, and Regional Economic Communities in Africa to take a more active stance against wildlife trafficking.

We strengthened the commitment to address wildlife trafficking expressed in both the APEC Leaders' and Foreign Ministerial Declarations issued in 2012 and 2013, and we are developing follow-on programming to build capacity in the region to reduce demand and strengthen enforcement during the 2014 Chinese APEC chairmanship.

We recently worked with 30 donor countries to increase funding significantly for the Global Environment Facility's activities to fight wildlife trafficking by addressing both supply and demand through monitoring and enforcement capacity building and awareness-raising campaigns.

Bilateral Efforts

We continue to address wildlife trafficking in our bilateral relationships. In February, Secretary Kerry and Indonesian Minister of Forestry Zulkifli Hasan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Conserving Wildlife and Combating Wildlife Trafficking. The MOU focuses on collaborative efforts to combat wildlife trafficking in Indonesia and in third countries, in particular, improving rhino conservation and protection.

We have also made strides in our bilateral engagement with China to combat wildlife trafficking over the last year building on commitments made in the 2012 and 2013 APEC Leaders Declarations and the 2013 Strategic and Economic

Dialogue (S&ED). We will organize a second breakout session on wildlife trafficking at the 2014 S&ED, following-up on the 2013 session and the subsequent progress made in the past year, which includes the destruction of about six tons each of our respective confiscated ivory stockpiles, several interdictions and prosecutions of wildlife traffickers, and separate coordinated events in Beijing and Washington that recognized the first World Wildlife Day on March 3rd. The 2014 breakout session agenda and outcome language are still under discussion, but key topics will include demand reduction; a request to China to enact an ivory ban similar the recent U.S. ban on the commercial trade of elephant ivory, with limited exceptions; and a commitment to support the development of a global network of Wildlife Enforcement Networks.

We are committed to do more and work smarter with partners around the world to support wildlife range and transit states in Africa to maintain the integrity of their national borders and protect the continent's iconic wildlife. On February 12, President Obama reached agreement with his French counterpart, Francois Hollande, to work together to combat wildlife trafficking in Central Africa. As current facilitator for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), we devoted an extended session to the issue at the November 2013 CBFP Partners Meeting. Additionally, this past March the State Department and USAID West Africa teams began a regional project with Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Togo to forge connections and share valuable information on wildlife crime in the region; there are plans to expand this conversation to additional West African countries this month with the goal of creating an integrated regional framework developed by and for West Africans to coordinate anti-wildlife trafficking efforts. An interesting note: the team is implementing the project virtually cost free by utilizing digital video conferencing technology already available at US Missions in the region.

In 2013 and 2014 the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) held exchanges focused on anti-poaching and anti-trafficking best practices, connecting wildlife authorities and private sector stakeholders from key African countries with counterparts in the United States.

U.S. Ambassadors in sub-Saharan African countries and State Department principals continually encourage African leaders and senior government officials to

take concrete steps to protect their wildlife, to prevent trafficking, and to put a stop to the corruption that enables the crimes to continue.

Conclusion

Combating wildlife trafficking is a complex challenge which demands a multi-faceted and whole of government approach. Within the framework of the National Strategy, we will work across the U.S. Government to focus our international investments to combat wildlife trafficking in the most strategic and effective way possible.

We seek an open and inclusive dialogue about the challenges presented by wildlife trafficking and possible ways to address those challenges. We recognize that the United States is part of the problem, and we are determined to be part of the solution.

We appreciate your support and interest. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.