

# [News story: UK aid to crack down on criminal gangs driving the illegal wildlife trade](#)

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has today (10 October) announced a new joint initiative with the Foreign Office, to target wildlife traffickers and criminal gangs, tackling the global scourge of the illegal wildlife trade.

The UK aid project will launch investigations, seize assets and train law enforcement in East and Southern African countries and will be the largest known project of its kind to crack down on financial crimes associated with the illegal wildlife trade in the world.

Ms Mordaunt will set out this support at an event with the Duke of Cambridge, where global financial organisations will jointly declare that they “will not knowingly facilitate or tolerate financial flows that are derived from IWT and associated corruption”.

This Wildlife Financial Taskforce will initially comprise of representatives from 30 global banks and financial organisations such as Standard Chartered, HSBC, RBS and City Group, and agencies and regulatory bodies including TRAFFIC and RUSI.

Today’s announcement comes ahead of the landmark [Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference](#) being held in London on 11-12 October, the largest conference ever to be held on this issue.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

We can only stop the illegal wildlife trade by targeting the international gangs and criminal networks which essentially drive it.

UK aid is directly supporting efforts to recover illegal assets, disrupt organised crime networks and stop the flow of dirty money so that we can protect endangered and trafficked species and bring those responsible to justice.

By protecting these species, UK aid enables some of the world’s poorest people to benefit from sustainable jobs which depend on the natural world and endangered, wild animals.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The illegal wildlife trade is driving endangered species to the

brink of extinction and robbing communities around the world of vital income. To truly end this crime we need to tackle the corruption which allows the trade to flourish, with cross-border investigations which lead to successful prosecutions.

The UK is funding programmes committed to do just that, helping law enforcement authorities in African countries to trace dirty money back to the criminal syndicates behind the dreadful illegal trade in animals and animal parts. This will help put the criminal kingpins behind the trade behind bars, where they belong.

Participating in the illegal wildlife trade is currently a low risk, high reward crime.

Choking the ability of poachers and traders to move money is an essential component of stopping the trade. The same gangs trafficking wildlife products are likely to move other illegal goods, like drugs and weapons.

This new support is the largest UK aid project to specifically crack down on dirty money enabling the illegal wildlife trade. The support will:

- Drive up the number of investigations and successful prosecutions for corruption, money laundering and wildlife trafficking, by identifying individuals and groups committing the crime; and training law enforcement to conduct investigations.
- Increase the use of sanctions like freezing and seizing assets and visa bans, and encouraging new tactics like investigating money laundering and tax evasion to disrupt criminal networks and target individual bosses – just like Al Capone.
- Improve cooperation of domestic and international law enforcement so that entire criminal networks can be targeted – including police, investigative units, shipping companies and the private sector.
- Support ‘parallel financial investigations’, tracking dirty money to allow an arrest of low level poachers or traffickers to lead to the identification and arrest of high-ranking criminals.

This work will include countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana and Côte d’Ivoire, where recent arrests of wildlife crime offenders provide the opportunity to go after senior crime bosses. Others may be chosen for further action in due course.

What the UK’s support will look like:

- Funding will go to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime to work with law enforcement, mentoring and training authorities in intelligence detection and investigative techniques
- The Egmont Centre will train, share best practice and improve international cooperation by Financial Investigation Units. Its members include the UK’s National Crime Agency and US Department of the Treasury.
- The FCO’s will focus on detecting, investigating and prosecuting

corruption relating to IWT – which will have knock on benefits in preventing the negative influence of corruption on international trade (including UK investors and exporters) and critical public services. This will also finance protection for whistle-blowing to encourage the reporting of illegal activity.

The UK funded Global Wildlife Programme has already worked with Kenya's Parliament to enact the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act 2013, which increased both prison sentences and financial penalties for wildlife-related crimes, and this new initiative will help us secure more results like that.

#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

- This funding consists of £3million from DFID (this will come from a mix of new money and allocations from pre-existing budgets), and £0.5million from the FCO.
- This money will be allocated equally between The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Egmont Group, through the Egmont Centre of FIU Excellence and Leadership

This new project is the largest sum of money UK aid has committed to specifically tackle money laundering in the IWT and is the largest project of its kind globally. Previous examples of tackling criminal gangs include:

- In Mozambique, four individuals were jailed after being caught selling ivory tusks, their derivatives in handicrafts, and other prohibited animal products in the Central Market of Maputo in early 2018. These offenses were only recently criminalized after a gap in the Law on Protection, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity (Law 16/2014 of 16 June) was closed by Parliament through an amendment passed in 2017.
- In Malawi, the National Parks and Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2016 sets tougher penalties for poachers and traffickers of "listed species," removing judicial discretion to impose monetary penalties for such offenses. Furthermore, for poaching and trafficking offenses related to both "endangered" and "listed" species, the Bill raises the maximum jail term for offenders to 30 years. Making use of the legislation in the Fall of 2017, a Malawian Chief Magistrate handed down an unprecedented total of an effective 36 years of prison time to three people convicted for poaching a black rhinoceros in Liwonde National Park.
- In Namibia, The Nature Conservation Amendment Act No. 3 of 2017 increased fines for rhino and elephant poachers to N\$25 million and for illegal hunting of protected species to N\$10 million and imprisonment of five to ten years.
- Under the Zambia Wildlife Act of 2015, illegal possession of trophies such as elephant ivory and rhino horn is punishable with sentences of between five and ten years imprisonment with no option of a fine. In July of 2018, The Lusaka High Court upheld the conviction of three foreigners and two nationals who were sentenced to five years of imprisonment with hard labour in December 2017, after finding them guilty of being in illegal possession of 25 pieces of rhino horn. Several other poachers and traffickers have been arrested and convicted

under the Wildlife Act of 2015.

### **Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference 11-12 October**

With over 1000 delegates, the IWT Conference will be the largest of its kind ever to be held. 84 countries have confirmed that they will be sending delegations, spanning Africa (26); Americas (14); Asia and Oceania (17); Europe (23) and the Middle East (4).

The conference will focus on three themes:

- Tackling IWT as a serious organised crime: strengthening end to end law enforcement.
- Building coalitions: engaging the private sector, NGOs and academia; harnessing technology and innovation.
- Closing markets for illegally traded wildlife products: building on the Chinese ivory trade ban.