

UN joins international community to salute park rangers' dedication and commitment

31 July 2017 – Park rangers across the world face increasing challenges and risks due to a surge in poaching and illicit trafficking in wildlife, the head of the United Nations entity on protection of endangered species today said, honouring the work of park rangers in protecting wild animals, plants and culture.

“Honest and hardworking park rangers devote their lives [to protecting our natural resources and cultural heritage](#) and, in some areas, these brave men and women regularly encounter well-resourced groups of poachers, equipped with high caliber weapons, who do not hesitate to use violence or threats of violence against them,” said John Scanlon, Secretary-General of the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

In recent years, rangers have increasingly been targeted by criminals seeking some of the world's most iconic animal species, such as elephants and rhinos, and plants, such as rosewood.

Mr. Scanlon added that the “illegal trade in wild animals and plants is occurring at a scale that threatens wildlife, people and their livelihoods” and is being driven by transnational organized crime groups and rebel militia groups, as well as rogue elements of regular military forces.

“The dedication and commitment shown by these honest hard working park rangers on a daily basis is worthy of much greater public recognition,” Mr. Scanlon said, welcoming World Ranger Day which is marked by the international community but not by the UN specifically.

VIDEO: Message from Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit

World Ranger Day takes place annually on 31 July to recognize the park rangers around the world who have been injured or killed in the line of duty.

In the past year, at least 105 rangers were killed doing their job, according to the International Ranger Federation.

The UN Environment Programme's ([UNEP](#)) Wild For Life programme added its voice today to celebrate rangers' work.

Praising park rangers for facing an array of challenges, including natural disasters like avalanches and floods, Wild For Life called rangers “hands-on heroes.”

Fighting crime, educating the public, and protecting our heritage... all in a day's work for the rangers [that safeguard](#) the earth's most treasured locations,” the campaign said.

It noted that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least 140 rangers [were killed](#) in the past 15 years in the Virunga National Park.