

Wildlife crime and conservation expert John Scanlon appointed chair of UK government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund

Conservation, sustainability and wildlife expert John E. Scanlon AO has been appointed by International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith as the first independent chair of the UK government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

The Challenge Fund tackles the illegal wildlife trade by providing support to projects around the world that develop sustainable livelihoods for local communities and help to strengthen law enforcement, support legal systems and reduce demand for illegal wildlife trade products.

John Scanlon is currently Special Envoy for African Parks and joins Defra as Chair of the IWT Challenge Fund with extensive knowledge and experience in conservation. He previously held the position of Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) for eight years between 2010- 2018, was the founding chair of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime in 2010 and is widely recognised for his work in tackling the illegal wildlife trade.

Announcing the appointment, International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

The illegal wildlife trade not only fuels corruption, it destabilises communities and strips them of their livelihoods. In addition, it is bringing some of the world's most iconic species to the brink of extinction, and for these reasons the UK government is committed to ending it.

John Scanlon has a wealth of experience in global conservation efforts and will undoubtedly support the Challenge Fund to the fullest extent as we continue to tackle this vile trade.

The IWT Challenge Fund provides vital support for projects that tackle the demand for illegal wildlife goods such as rosewood, tiger pelts and bones, rhino horn, elephant tusks, and the world's most trafficked mammal, the pangolin.

To date over £26 million has already been allocated to 85 projects around the world, with the [latest round of funding supporting five projects](#) in Asia, two in Africa and South America respectively and one in Europe.

Projects have helped combat jaguar losses in Bolivia by expanding

intelligence networks, reduced Mackaw trafficking in Honduras by providing technical support to indigenous communities and has saved lions in Uganda through funding anti-poaching training.

Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund Chair John Scanlon said

The illegal wildlife trade has a devastating impact on wildlife, local communities, national economies, security, public health and entire ecosystems. The Challenge Fund is a central part of the UK's efforts to help drive much needed changes to fight these highly destructive crimes across the globe.

The UK has played a leading part in scaling up the fight against illegal wildlife trade and I look forward to this new role and to working with the UK government and a wide array of committed partners.

Together we will support well-crafted projects to end the illegal wildlife trade, to lead or amplify global efforts to protect the world's most endangered species and support communities who live amongst some of our most cherished wildlife.

The illegal wildlife trade is a dangerous and ecologically damaging criminal industry worth over £17 billion a year and threatens both wildlife and people, undermining development and harming local communities.

As part of the [25 Year Environment Plan](#), the government has committed to becoming a world leader in tackling the illegal wildlife trade, in order to protect the world's most endangered species.

The UK is investing more than £66 million between 2014 and 2024 to take action against the illegal wildlife trade through the IWTCF, targeted direct grants and by working in partnership with international organisation. Applications for stage one of [round 7 of the Challenge Fund](#) are now closed and successful applicants through to stage two are expected to be notified later this year.