



3 March 2015 - On the second observance of World Wildlife Day, we remember that wildlife crime is the fifth most profitable illicit trade in the world. Combined estimates from the [OECD](#), [UNODC](#), [UNEP](#) and [INTERPOL](#) place the monetary value of all transnational organized environmental crime between 70–213 billion USD annually. It represents a significant economic, environmental and security threat that has received relatively little attention in the past.

The forest elephant population size has been estimated to decline by 62% between 2002 and 2011; with 20-25,000 killed per year out of a population of only 420,000-650,000.

Rhinos have disappeared entirely from several Asian and African countries in recent years.

Wildlife and forest crime has a serious role in threat finance to organized crime, and non-state armed groups including terrorist groups. Ivory is likely a primary source of income to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) currently operating in the border triangle of South Sudan, CAR and DRC.

The scale of revenue from wildlife crime is dwarfed by the income from illegal logging and forest crime which has previously been estimated to represent 10–30% of the total global timber trade.

In Africa 90% of wood consumed is used for wood fuel and charcoal. Internet listings reveal over 1,900 illegal charcoal dealers in Africa alone. The net profits from dealing and taxing unregulated, illicit or illegal charcoal combined is estimated at USD 2.4–9 billion, compared to the USD 2.65 billion worth of street value heroin and cocaine in the region. They have generated an estimated annual total of USD 38–56 million for Al Shabaab.

For more information see this [Rapid Response Report](#) by UNEP and Interpol.

Ban Ki-moon states, in his message for 2015 World Wildlife Day:

"On this second observance of World Wildlife Day, I urge all consumers, suppliers and governments to treat crimes against wildlife as a threat to our sustainable future. The UN system, its Member States and a wide range of partners from around the world are highlighting the simple yet firm message that 'It's time to get serious about wildlife crime'."

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3 MARCH