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PRESS RELEASE

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US-FUNDED LEGAL ANALYSIS AIMS TO END ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

ABUJA: The US Embassy, in partnership with the Africa Nature Investors Foundation (ANI) and Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), launched the groundbreaking resource [*Combating Wildlife Crime in Nigeria – An analysis of the Criminal Justice Legislative Framework*](#).

National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency Director General Aliyu Jauro, representing Honourable Minister of State for Environment Sharon Ikeazor, chaired the launch.

US Embassy Charge d’Affaires Kathleen FitzGibbon welcomed participants to the event and emphasized the critical need for greater communication and collaboration between investigative, prosecutorial and judicial bodies to bring about quicker justice and sentences which hold violators accountable.

“By working together, we will make more rapid progress in eliminating, neutralizing and disrupting wildlife trafficking,” she said. “We need to do more to raise public indignation about this ugly crime that imperils the planet’s biodiversity, funds organized crime, spreads disease like COVID-19 and threatens the very existence of Nigeria’s unique and beautiful animals.”

Nigeria has emerged as the main transit and export hub for trafficking in elephant ivory, pangolin scales and other wildlife, but the in-depth analysis of the country’s relevant laws aims to help turn the tide.

EIA Executive Director Mary Rice explained: “The networks responsible for trafficking wildlife from Nigeria are organized and well-coordinated, but the law enforcement response is fragmented and weak. This legal analysis recommends a coordinated multi-agency approach to strategically disrupt wildlife crime networks.



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“We commend the Nigeria Customs Service,” she added, “for the significant seizures of pangolin scales and ivory, as well as arrests, made in July and January this year.”

ANI Executive Director Tunde Morakinyo added: “For too long, Nigeria has been rapidly losing its precious biodiversity to crime and corruption. The legal analysis launched today highlights concrete actions that we can adopt to protect our last remaining wild species and places for the present and future generations of Nigerians.”

The event was attended by senior representatives from key Nigerian Government agencies and offices with the mandate to tackle wildlife trafficking, including the Nigerian Customs Service, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, Nigerian Senate, Attorney General’s Office, National Judicial Institute, National Police, National Parks Service, Department of Forestry and National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency.

EDITORS' NOTES

1. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) investigates and campaigns against environmental crime and abuses. Our undercover investigations expose transnational wildlife crime, with a focus on elephants, pangolins and tigers, and forest crimes such as illegal logging and deforestation for cash crops such as palm oil; we work to safeguard global marine ecosystems by tackling plastic pollution, exposing illegal fishing and seeking an end to all whaling; and we address the threat of global warming by campaigning to curtail powerful refrigerant greenhouse gases and exposing related criminal trade.
2. Africa Nature Investors Foundation (ANI) is a Nigerian NGO dedicated to applying best practice conservation practices and tackling the illegal wildlife trade in Nigeria. In 2017 ANI signed a 30-year partnership agreement with the Nigerian Government to offer support for the management and development of Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Nigeria’s largest national park.
3. Read and download *Combating Wildlife Crime in Nigeria – An analysis of the Criminal Justice Legislative Framework* at <https://eia-international.org/wp-content/uploads/Combating-Wildlife-Crime-in-Nigeria-2021-FINAL.pdf>

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