



## **Report to Congress on the Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt Wildlife Trafficking Act P.L. 114-231; 16 U.S.C. §§ 7601-7644**

The Eliminate, Neutralize, and Disrupt (END) Wildlife Trafficking Act (P.L. 114-231; 16 U.S.C. §§ 7601-7644) (the Act) directs the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce, to submit to Congress a report that lists Focus Countries and Countries of Concern, as defined in the Act.

Wildlife trafficking remains a serious transnational crime that threatens security, economic prosperity, the rule of law, long-standing conservation efforts, and human health. E.O. 13773 of February 9, 2017 called for a comprehensive and decisive approach to dismantle organized crime syndicates and specifically recognized the connection between wildlife trafficking and transnational criminal organizations.

The Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking (Task Force), co-chaired by the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Attorney General, brings together 17 federal departments and agencies to implement the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking (the “National Strategy”). The U.S. government’s three-pronged approach to combating

wildlife trafficking – strengthening law enforcement, reducing demand, and building international cooperation – deprives criminals of a key source of financing, reducing the criminal threat posed to U.S. citizens.

The Task Force makes a difference on the ground at home and worldwide to combat wildlife trafficking. Task Force activities are coordinated across the U.S. government: efficiencies are identified and leveraged, redundancies eliminated, and resources used more strategically; international outreach continues to expand; and improved reporting has identified new areas for U.S. engagement. Collaborating with the private sector, local communities, and NGOs, the United States leads the way globally, securing agreements and commitments from governments and stakeholders to take urgent action at all levels. Highlights of Task Force efforts will appear in a separate strategic review, as called for in 16 USC 7631 (d).

## **Focus Countries**

### **Methodology for Determining Focus Countries**

With the 2022 reauthorization of the END Act, the Task Force established a new process for identifying Focus Countries. This process used the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC)'s TOC Index, produced with U.S. government support, which is comprised of the most reliable data available on the levels of wildlife trafficking identified in source, transit, or destination countries for trafficked wildlife or wildlife products, and on the countries' capacities to counter these crimes. The process also

evaluated the efficacy of potential U.S. engagement with host governments in such countries to address the scourge of this malign trade. The Task Force then incorporated expert guidance into the process to evaluate information not otherwise accounted for, for example, from U.S. federal law enforcement analyses, embassy reporting on wildlife trafficking, NGO advisories, and available intelligence reports.

U.S. embassies supplied specific data, where available, on wildlife trafficking investigations, prosecutions, and punishments; campaigns to reduce demand for illegally sourced wildlife and wildlife products and to raise awareness about wildlife trafficking; and assessments of legal frameworks within each country purporting to address the problem adequately, among other indicators. These indicators measure inputs, outputs, or outcomes of law enforcement capacity building and cooperation efforts; the extent of any policy reform; and tailored demand reduction actions. They also measure how serious wildlife crime is perceived in each country.

U.S. missions in all 24 Focus Countries reported indicator data this year. Every post reported supporting host country wildlife law enforcement with training or other resources in the last two years. Twenty-one of 24 posts reported data on arrests, prosecutions, and convictions of wildlife traffickers. Eighteen posts reported existing laws treating wildlife trafficking as a serious crime. The Task Force also obtained data on demand reduction indicators for 11 of the 24 Focus Countries, reaching an estimated 197 million people.

The Task Force further evaluated whether governments had recently taken steps to improve legislation, regulations, and/or enforcement of their national laws, as well as evaluated other trends that might suggest that a country is increasing its efforts to combat illegal trade in wildlife.

## **2024 Focus Countries**

The Department of State, in consultation with the Departments of the Interior and Commerce as required by the END Act, as well as the Department of Justice and USAID, determined 22 of the previous 28 countries and jurisdictions listed as Focus Countries in the 2021 END Act Report should remain listed. Each of those 22 countries continue as a “major source of wildlife trafficking products or their derivatives, a major transit point of wildlife trafficking products or their derivatives, or a major consumer of wildlife trafficking products.” The six countries that did not carry over from the 2021 END Act Report to this report fell off for several reasons. Hong Kong dropped because the Task Force no longer considered it sufficiently independent from the PRC to merit a separate inclusion. The remaining countries, Bangladesh, Burma, Malaysia, Togo, and the United Arab Emirates, fell off either due to the new methodology the Task Force used to identify Focus Countries, pursuant to the 2022 reauthorization of the END Act, or present separate challenges to implementation of U.S. activities. The Department of State further determined, again in consultation with these agencies, two additional countries should be designated as Focus Countries.

This determination is based on analysis of the statutory criteria in the Act and does not reflect a positive or negative judgment of the listed countries or indicate these countries are not working diligently to combat wildlife trafficking. Indeed, the United States has longstanding partnerships with many of these countries with respect to combating wildlife trafficking and recognizes strong political will already exists in many of these countries to tackle this problem. The Department and other Task Force agencies look forward to continuing close and constructive relationships with these countries as we collaborate to combat wildlife trafficking.

Consistent with 16 USC 7631, U.S. missions in each Focus Country will revise their strategic plans based on the respective mission's assessment of wildlife trafficking within that country. U.S. agencies will use the strategic plans to guide and coordinate U.S. approaches and responses to the needs and gaps identified in the assessment. The Task Force co-chairs, along with USAID, have previously developed and distributed templates for both the assessments and strategic plans. All Task Force agencies, both at post and at agency headquarters, were invited to contribute to their development. The Task Force will review the updated assessments and strategic plans for completeness and consistency, recognizing variability based on location, resources within the U.S. mission, and previous engagement on the issue.

Together these documents will provide an overview of the issues related to wildlife trafficking in each country, identify key areas for strategic intervention by the U.S. government, and either establish a new platform or

support existing structures within the mission to guide a coordinated, “whole of government” approach to interventions.

### ***2024 Focus Country List (in alphabetical order)***

- Brazil
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Colombia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Gabon
- India
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Laos
- Madagascar
- Mexico
- Mozambique
- Nepal
- Nigeria
- People’s Republic of China
- Philippines
- Republic of the Congo
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Uganda
- Vietnam
- Zimbabwe

### **Countries of Concern**

To identify Countries of Concern among the 24 Focus Countries as defined under 16 USC 7601 (5), the Department of State, in consultation with the Departments of the Interior and Commerce, as well as with the Department of Justice and USAID, reviewed publicly available information as well as classified material to identify governments actively engaged in or knowingly profiting from trafficking of endangered or threatened species. The

Department of State designated the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Laos, and Madagascar as Countries of Concern in the first three END Act reports, 2017-19. In 2020, Cambodia, Cameroon, and Nigeria were added. There were no changes in 2021. For 2024, Task Force agencies spent considerable time reviewing the criteria that had led to the earlier designations, and the new, expanded scope of that designation under 16 USC 7601 (4)(B), and ultimately decided on no changes. The Country of Concern designation does not indicate that all parts of a government are or have been involved in wildlife trafficking, but it does indicate serious concerns either high-level or systemic government involvement has occurred. The Task Force will, among other things, ensure U.S. government agencies coordinate among themselves and with non-federal partners to implement the respective U.S. mission strategic plans developed in accordance with 16 USC 7631 (a)(2) of the Act, with a view to supporting these countries and their governments' efforts to reduce trade in, and consumer demand for, illegally traded wildlife and wildlife products.

### **2024 Countries of Concern List (in alphabetical order)**

- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Laos
- Madagascar
- Nigeria

More than one of these countries have taken affirmative steps to strengthen enforcement, reduce demand, and improve international cooperation to combat wildlife trafficking. Countries demonstrating serious and sustained efforts to prevent and prosecute wildlife trafficking may be removed from the Countries of Concern list in the next report, barring other factors.