

Remarks - U.S. Assistant Secretary Jones
Germany-Gabon Wildlife Trafficking Event on UNGA Margins 9/26/13

Excellencies, colleagues, good afternoon. I would like to thank our hosts Gabon and Germany for organizing this important event. As we have heard from earlier speakers, ensuring that wildlife trafficking is a highly visible priority is critical to all of us.

The United States has long been committed to combating wildlife trafficking. This commitment has grown under the leadership of President Obama; Secretary Kerry is a strong champion of efforts to combat wildlife trafficking; and former Secretary Clinton continues her strong support of this issue as we just heard at the CGI event.

On July 1 of during his visit to Tanzania, President Obama issued an Executive Order establishing a Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking. This Executive Order does three principal things. First, it establishes a Task Force that addresses this topic and reaches across the U.S. Government. The conservation, enforcement, foreign policy and security aspects of combating wildlife trafficking are evident in the agencies selected to co-chair the Task Force: the Department of Interior, Department of Justice and Department of State.

The Executive Order calls for the development of a national strategy. It also establishes an Advisory Council, recognizing that addressing this problem requires strong partnerships with the non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

At the State Department, we have developed a 10 million dollar program to provide training and technical assistance to key range states in sub-Saharan Africa. This complements a variety of existing programs that target wildlife trafficking as part of broader law enforcement and environmental protection efforts.

Wildlife trafficking is a complex challenge that necessitates the joint efforts of governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, media and individuals.

We need to work even more effectively through existing mechanisms, such as the regional Wildlife Enforcement Networks and the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), which is comprised of the CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

As we consider the United Nations' role in this effort, we need to consider existing efforts. The April 2013 UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice resolution that called on member states to classify wildlife trafficking as a "serious crime" was a major step forward. Now UN Member States need to take steps to strengthen laws and regulations and their enforcement, including increased penalties for wildlife trafficking-related offenses.

The United States recognizes the heavy toll that wildlife trafficking is taking, particularly in African and Southeast Asian nations. We understand that it is decimating natural resources and ecosystems, threatening security, and undermining economic development. We understand that wildlife trafficking is a conservation problem, an economic problem, a health problem and a security problem. We are committed to do more and work smarter with partners around the world to address this challenging issue. Thank you.