



LATF STATEMENT DURING 2015 WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

``***“It’s time to get serious about wildlife crime”***``

``Safeguarding wild fauna and flora resources for sustainable development and security``

Remember, “Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude,”

“Safeguard Creation, because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!”

Pope Francis -[May 28, 2014](#)

1. The Lusaka Agreement Task Force on Cooperative Enforcement Operations Directed at Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora (LATF) wishes to join the rest of the world as we mark the second celebrations of the world wildlife day. The theme for this year’s celebration is ***“It’s time to get serious about wildlife crime”***. In doing so, since inception, LATF has continued to collect and share vital intelligence, undertake co-operative enforcement operations, carry out investigations into violations of wildlife laws and regulations as well as building enforcement capacities among state wildlife agencies including strengthening wildlife laws and inter-agency working mechanisms at national, sub-regional, regional and multiregional levels. The organisation is developing necessary linkages and partnerships with other regional and international institutions across Africa and globally to enhance service delivery. Most of these initiatives are, however, yet to receive the requisite technical and financial supports from the international community. Despite increased law enforcement efforts and enhancement of penalties to wildlife offenders, most African states are still witnessing worrying trends in the poaching of wildlife, especially the most endangered and tourism keystone species like elephants and rhinos, as well as trafficking and illegal trade in their products.
2. LATF is deeply concerned about continued use of East Africa’s international points of entry/exit as conduits for illicit wild fauna and flora products. It is common knowledge that criminal networks have taken full advantage of forces of globalization, and the



modernization that comes with it, to traffic in wildlife products. At this era of globalization, it is easy to poach, transport products through various routes (courtesy of modern transportation system), sell the products in distant markets, and finally send the proceeds to the financiers in another part of the globe within a day or two. This scenario demonstrates the extent to which wildlife crime has evolved.

3. LATF, however, notes with optimism the current decline in terms of number of cases and quantities of illegally traded consignments of wildlife product seizures in or originating from Africa over the last two years. We believe that this is a result of hard work and improvement in enforcement efforts, closer collaboration among agencies and states, as well as compliance with CITES international regulations regarding trade in fauna and flora and the global momentum coupled with enhanced political will by governments. LATF on its part will continue to play its rightful role of curtailing and crippling the major trans-national wildlife criminal networks within its means. Its high-profile multi-regional enforcement operations such as Cobra I and II (of 2012 and 2013 respectively) that led to shared knowledge and experiences among source, transit and destination countries of wildlife contraband as well as the recovery of assorted wildlife products besides the apprehension and prosecution of those behind them will continue to inspire our future undertakings. Pursuant to its mandate, LATF will continue to work in close collaboration with wildlife institutions and international community in the noble fight against poaching and illicit trade in wild fauna and flora in Africa and beyond.
4. As the international community commemorates this year's World Wildlife Day, LATF wishes to congratulate and cheer those men and women who have devoted their lives to the protection of wildlife against illegal exploitation, trafficking and illicit trade contrary to the appropriate national and international laws. Their devotion to duty, courage and tenacity in withstanding harsh and dangerous field conditions, determination to keep-off corrupt tendencies, and patriotism in the care of national resources should not be in vain but ought to be remembered and supported by all who care about wildlife, a unique God's creation.



5. LATF urges corporate and state policy makers to continue raising the profile of conservation in their countries, and in particular, enhancing the legislative and constitutive provisions necessary in the protection of wild faunal and floral life against illicit exploitation and trade. These measures should be supported by enhanced law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial actions. All poaching gangs and illicit wildlife traffickers should be dealt with ruthlessly at all fronts if we are to save the remaining wildlife populations for the sake of the present and future human generations.

6. As we enhance cooperation among countries to combat illegal wildlife trade, LATF calls upon the international community, governments, donors and civil society to raise the levels of awareness and mobilize more financial resources to fight local, cross-border and international illegal trade in wild fauna and flora. At the same time more efforts should be dedicated to develop the capacities of law enforcement agencies in Africa to combat the rising scourge. LATF further wishes to urge African governments to invest in technologies such as forensic laboratories to enhance effectiveness in combating illegal trade in wild fauna species especially the highly threatened species like elephant and rhino. Continued government good will and financial support to law enforcement agencies is highly required not only to facilitate national actions but also to meet international commitment and obligations as well as soliciting support from international development partners.

7. LATF reaffirms its steadfast commitment to the fight against illegal exploitation of Africa's wild fauna and flora and its associated illicit trade. As we wish to call for continued support from governments, multilateral organisations, donor community and development partners including NGOs towards stemming this vice, we would like to wish everyone wonderful celebrations during this World Wildlife Day 2015.

"It's the little things citizens do. That's what will make the difference. My little thing is planting trees."

"There are opportunities even in the most difficult moments."

— **Wangari Maathai**,

