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for immediate release.

Anti-Poaching Intelligence Group Southern Africa

The recent worldwide initiatives by many international conservation NGO'S and wildlife enforcement agencies are encouraging as we track marked increase in seizures and arrests of persons involved in wildlife crime. We are concerned at the sentences handed down to wildlife traffickers and smugglers involved in elephant poaching and ivory smuggling. We are of the opinion that many countries underestimate the depth and scope of Organized Crime Syndicates involved in the illegal wildlife trade in Africa. A sentence recently handed down by a New Jersey court to a Chinese National of 5 years for ivory and rhino horn smuggling in Newark is no deterrent at all. While enforcement units concentrate on large seizures of 800kg and above, the collective tonnage of small seizures cannot be ignored, in the UAE Dubai Airports Security has seized 20 consignments of 1,500 pieces of rough and processed ivory in 2014.

New York identified as an ivory hub had 11,300 products for sale in New York City in 2008- nearly half the products sold yearly nationwide. Recent legislation and ivory bans in US are encouraging and Europe needs to follow suit.

African countries need to urgently revise wildlife crime legislation for certain species, the recent sentencing of an ivory smuggler in Togo who had smuggled 700kg of elephant tusks to 2 years imprisonment, the maximum sentence in Togo, highlight's the urgent need for revised legislation and tougher sentencing of those involved in Organized Wildlife Crime. While Togo has increased enforcement efforts to counter the illegal ivory trade seizing 4.5 tons of ivory in the past 7 months, these efforts need to go hand in hand with tougher sentences, Organised Crime legislation, and Asset Forfeiture to counter the activities of syndicates involved in trafficking ivory and other wildlife products.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (Palermo Convention) calls for increased cooperation and intelligence sharing of enforcement agencies to counter the threat of Organised Crime sources indicate this is not happening in many African countries. Good intelligence is at the heart of every successful military operation and can tip the balance in favour of those fighting on the front lines. Sightings made from intelligence manned Ops are proactive have allowed anti-poaching units to intercept poachers before any animals are killed. But current efforts need to move further than just concentrating on area intelligence which is currently the case. Trans regional Organised Crime syndicates can only be effectively countered by regional and international intelligence led operations and cooperation.

With increased terror incidents in Kenya and Nigeria and the ever increasing danger of splinter groups carrying out further attacks in other African countries, it is in Africa's Security interest to increase intelligence production, cooperation and exchange. Not only for terror related groups but also to counter the security threat posed by Transnational Organised Crime Syndicates involved in wildlife crime. While most funding raised for anti-poaching units has

been allocated to perimeter security, increased training and specialized equipment. very little funding has been allocated for intelligence production. Specialized wildlife Intelligence a force multiplier can no longer be ignored and requires urgent funding, our group a non-registered non-profit has been severely effected due to lack of funding for specialized communications equipment, computers, computer software, data , vehicles and day to day funding for operations.

At the moment many African species are being protected by “a very thin Green Line” of Game Rangers on the frontline, these men in many African countries are the last line of defence against the survival of many species under very real threat. Recent intelligence reports indicate a small minority of game rangers have been recruited by Organised Crime Syndicates to poach wildlife in South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia, increased intelligence gathering and exchange will uncover these industry insiders

Elephant, rhino and Pangolin are in the spotlight as massive seizures in the Far East indicate massive trafficking, the recent seizure of 2 tons of Pangolin scales in Hong Kong are of concern for the survival of all African species of Pangolin.

The recent linkages imposed by the US on aid packages to increased enforcement actions are a step in the right direction and should be followed by the EU and other countries. The release of recent elephant survey conducted in Mozambique indicating 900 Elephant poached over a three year period once again places Mozambique on the radar, coupled with the rhino poacher incursions from Mozambique into South Africa’s Kruger National Park and inability of any agreement signed with Mozambique to produce any marked decrease in incursions into Kruger National Park.

We call on the International community to impose linkages on any aid packages to Mozambique, to encourage measurable law enforcement actions against Transnational Organised Crime syndicates entrenched and operating within Mozambique.

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