

On 9 April 2014, Belgium became the latest country to destroy its ivory stockpiles; similar action was taken by Chad on 21 February 2014, and a week earlier France destroyed some three tonnes of its stockpile of ivory; other recent public ivory destruction events have taken place in Gabon, the Philippines, the USA, and China.

Hong Kong and Tanzania have also expressed their intention to destroy their ivory stockpiles.

According to Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's Elephant and Rhino Programme Leader, "beyond influencing local consumers, however, the jury is still out on what effect destruction events like this have on the dynamics of illegal ivory trade".

At the recent Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in London (see page 1), Viet Nam's Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, made a commitment to halt illegal wildlife trade in Viet Nam; he has subsequently issued a top-level Directive to his line ministries prioritizing enforcement at all levels to combat poaching and trafficking of African Elephant ivory and rhinoceros horn.

POACHING COULD WIPE OUT A FIFTH OF AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS OVER NEXT DECADE

The latest analysis of poaching data estimates that in 2012 some 15 000 elephants were illegally killed at 42 sites across 27 African countries participating in MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants), a programme co-ordinated by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). According to the MIKE analysis, this amounts to an estimated 22 000 elephants illegally killed continent-wide in 2012, a slight reduction on the estimated 25 000 elephants poached in 2011.

These figures are likely to be conservative: results of an extensive wildlife census commissioned by the Tanzanian Government carried out in October 2013 in the country's Selous Game Reserve and its surrounding ecosystem, show an estimated 67% of elephants have been lost there in just four years, according to a report compiled by the Frankfurt Zoological Society. Where some 100 000 elephants roamed in the 1970s, numbers have fallen from an estimated 39 000 in 2009 to 13 084 elephants in 2013.

TRAFFIC; <http://www.zgf.de/?id=72&reportId=117&language=en>

2013 WORST YEAR ON RECORD FOR RHINO POACHING IN SOUTH AFRICA

For 16 years, between 1990 and 2005, rhinoceros poaching losses in South Africa averaged 14 animals each year. In 2013 alone, some 1004 were killed and already this year some 277 have been poached to date (9 April). Kruger National Park remains the hardest hit, with 166 animals poached so far during 2014. South Africa has the best conservation record for rhinoceroses, but a unique set of circumstances—unscrupulous wildlife criminals, some corrupt wildlife officials, and hardened Asian criminal syndicates—lies behind the devastating number poached in the country over recent years. Key to addressing this challenge is the need to work closely with local communities to ensure their long-term income and benefits, in addition to changing the consumption behaviour of targeted consumer groups. According to Roland Melisch, TRAFFIC's Senior Programme Director for Africa and Europe, "the three essential elements needed to fight this crisis are: ramping up anti-poaching measures, shutting down illegal trade routes using state-of-the-art technology along the whole trade chain, and supporting efforts to reduce the demand for illegal African wildlife in Asia." Criminals are deploying advanced technologies to carry out their activities, from use of night vision scopes, silenced weapons, to darting equipment and helicopters. Such organized smuggling syndicates can only be fought by deploying cutting-edge forensic technologies, and by building the capacity of African and Asian law enforcement officers in the use of such modern technology—adapted to the needs on a country-by-country basis. Furthermore, it is imperative that governmental efforts to bring about behavioural change to reduce consumption for illegal wildlife products in Asia are strongly supported, and greater effort made to understand the underlying factors influencing consumer behaviour.

Milliken, T. and Shaw, J. (2013). *The South Africa—Viet Nam Rhino Horn Trade Nexus: A deadly combination of institutional lapses, corrupt wildlife industry professionals and Asian crime syndicates*. TRAFFIC report: [traffic_species_mammals66.pdf](http://species.mammals66.pdf); www.environment.gov.za/mediarelease/rhinopoachingupdate_14march2014; https://www.environment.gov.za/mediarelease/molewa_mou_biodiversityconservationandmanagement; TRAFFIC

