

# World Environment Day 2016

## Secretary-General's Message for 2016

This year's observance of World Environment Day shines a much-needed spotlight on the illegal trade in wildlife. There is grave cause for alarm. Elephants are being slaughtered for their ivory, rhinos for their horns, and pangolins for their scales. From sea turtles to tigers to rosewood, thousands of species of wild animals and plants are being driven ever closer to extinction. The businesses and individuals involved are motivated solely by short-term gain at the expense of long-term benefit to communities and habitats. In many instances, they act in collusion with transnational organized crime networks and groups actively involved in destabilizing nations.

The United Nations and its many partners have resolved to tackle this illicit trade, including by setting clear targets to put an end to poaching in the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted last year by all 193 Member States. Last month, at the second United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, we launched a UN "Wild For Life" global campaign, led by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Office on Drugs

and Crime (UNODC) and the Convention on the International Trade in Wild Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). The campaign asks everyone to pledge to end the illegal trade in wildlife, from ordinary citizens, who can ensure they do not buy prohibited products, to governments, who can pursue change through implementing effective policies to protect species and ecosystems.

Angola, which is this year's World Environment Day global host, has served notice that it will no longer tolerate the sale of illegal wildlife products, and is strengthening legislation and increasing border controls as part of efforts to restore elephant populations that were devastated by the country's civil war. Such action sends a strong message that wild species of plants and animals are a precious commodity that must be sustainably managed and protected from illegal trade.

On this World Environment Day, I urge people and governments everywhere to overcome indifference, combat greed and act to preserve our natural heritage for the benefit of this and future generations.

*Ban Ki-moon*