



Permanent Mission of the
International Union for Conservation of Nature
to the United Nations

Preserving our Forests - Challenges and Opportunities in Combatting Forest Crimes

World wildlife day side event

Statement delivered by the Permanent Observer of IUCN to the UN, Dr Sofie Jaffe

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Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

On World Wildlife Day, we are reminded that forests are not only ecosystems — they are climate stabilisers, biodiversity reservoirs, and the foundation of livelihoods for millions of people.

Yet forest crime continues to undermine these values. Illegal logging, land conversion, unsustainable extraction, and related offences threaten biodiversity, carbon storage, and the rights and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These crimes may be local, but they often intersect with broader transnational and organised activities, including corruption and illicit financial flows, and pose risks to environmental defenders on the frontlines.

The World Conservation Community has recognised the need for comprehensive action:

IUCN underscores that combating illegal forestry is not solely an environmental imperative—it is a governance, security, and development priority. Addressing it requires coordinated action across sectors, borders, and institutions.

The broader multilateral momentum is clear. Environmental crime features prominently in preparations for the 15th UN Crime Congress in Abu Dhabi and in ongoing UN General Assembly discussions on preventing and combating illicit trafficking in wildlife and other crimes that affect the environment.

International efforts to address CAE are gaining more and more political backing. In addition to UN processes, the G20 has elevated CAE as a global priority, including through the G20 Cape Town Ministerial Declaration on Environmental Crimes.

For IUCN, forest crime must be addressed across a full governance spectrum:

- Prevention, through improved forest monitoring and accountability
- Protection of rangers and environmental defenders
- Strengthened detection and community engagement
- Effective national criminalisation and enforcement
- Robust international cooperation

IUCN's unique value lies in bringing together science, law and policy.

IUCN can provide technical legal expertise to support States in strengthening legislation and aligning it with international standards. Our scientific tools and data — including monitoring approaches, the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™, and community-based monitoring initiatives — can help to clarify environmental harm, strengthen evidence bases, and support informed, evidence-based policy and enforcement.

Preserving our forests requires more than enforcement alone. It requires coherent legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and international cooperation grounded in the rule of law.

Forest crime is not only an environmental issue — it is a governance issue, a development issue, and a justice issue.

On this World Wildlife Day, IUCN reaffirms its commitment to working with Member States, UNODC, and partners to ensure that environmental crimes including forest crimes are addressed as the serious transnational crimes they are — and that our forests are preserved for present and future generations.

Thank you.
