



Financial
Intelligence Centre

MEDIA RELEASE

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EXPERTS GATHER TO SHARE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ON COMBATING ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

12 June 2023: The fight against illegal wildlife trade and trafficking across the globe was given a shot in the arm on Friday, 9 June 2023, when government and public sector experts from the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa shared their knowledge and expertise at a roundtable on fighting this scourge.

Held at the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) offices, the roundtable was a follow up to a commitment by the National Treasury departments of South Africa and the US, to support a United States-South Africa task force to assist in addressing illegal wildlife trade. The commitment was made in January this year by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana and US Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen, during her visit to South Africa. The focus of task force is on increasing information sharing, supporting law enforcement agencies and strengthening anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism controls.

In opening the roundtable discussions, Director of the FIC, Advocate Xolisile Khanyile said: “One of the crucial elements in combating illegal wildlife trade is understanding the landscape in which it operates.

“We cannot ignore the intertwining of corruption and wildlife trafficking as it undermines our collective efforts.”

In the discussions, participants explored the methodologies individuals and criminal syndicates commonly use in perpetuating illicit trade and trafficking in animals, animal products, timber and other fauna and flora. All the participants acknowledged the

centrality of information sharing and the importance of private sector involvement in helping to disrupt and deter wildlife crime.

The roundtable looked at assisting and building on linkages between the participants, which included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, Financial Crime Enforcement Network from the US and the UK-based United for Wildlife, which fosters global collaboration in the private sector to stop the trafficking of wildlife products. South Africa was represented by its South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force (SAMLIT) members, primarily the banks, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment, Defence Intelligence, the National Prosecuting Authority, South African Police Service's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, South African Revenue Service and the FIC.

Commenting on the roundtable, David Fein said: "United for Wildlife is privileged to support the public-private partnerships in the United States and South Africa in their efforts to combat illegal wildlife trafficking.

"We are honoured to be asked to support the new United States – South Africa Task Force, which we believe will set new standards for international cooperation on financial flows linked to the illegal wildlife trade."

At its conclusion, the roundtable agreed on strengthening existing partnerships geared to fight illegal wildlife trade, including SAMLIT's expert working group which is looking into the financial flows related to illegal wildlife trade. The two public-private partnerships, SAMLIT and FinCen Exchange in the US, which is part of the Financial Crimes Enforcement Exchange, will work closely on sharing and exchanging information. The meeting agreed that it was necessary to increase support, including training, to law enforcement to expedite investigations on wildlife crime. The attendees said they were looking forward to an increase in sharing information that could lead to joint analysis, successful investigations, prosecution and serious disruption of kingpins involved in illicit wildlife trade.

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**ISSUED BY THE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE CENTRE
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Note to editors: As South Africa's national centre for the gathering and analysis of financial data, the role of the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC) is to safeguard the integrity of the country's financial system and its institutions. In pursuit of this, the Financial Intelligence Centre Act, 2001 (Act 38 of 2001), mandates the FIC to assist in the identification of the proceeds of crime, in combating money laundering and in the financing of terrorism, and facilitate effective supervision and enforcement of the Act. Under this legislation, financial and non-financial institutions are required to fulfil certain compliance obligations, including registering with, and filing various regulatory reports to the FIC. The information provided in these reports forms the basis upon which analysis is conducted to develop financial intelligence reports for use by a wide range of law enforcement agencies, investigative authorities, and other institutions to facilitate the administration and enforcement of the laws of the Republic. The FIC Act also sets out the enforcement and penalty regime for non-compliance with the FIC Act.

The 2021/22 financial year saw initiatives which had been implemented in prior years take further root and yield results through collaboration and partnerships. Among these was the work of the Fusion Centre, a collaboration of law enforcement agencies and the FIC, and that of the public-private partnership, the South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force. Both initiatives bring together necessary resources and focus attention on dealing with money laundering and terrorist financing.

The financial year also saw the adoption of the Financial Action Task Force mutual evaluation report in October 2021, following their assessment of the country's capability and capacity for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing. Work to address the identified deficiencies got under way in the 2021/22 financial year.

For more about the FIC visit www.fic.gov.za

| ITEM | 2021/22 |
|---|---|
| Total institutions registered | 45 555 |
| Regulatory reports received | >5.12 million |
| Cash threshold reports received | >4.5 million |
| Suspicious and unusual transaction reports received | 533 277 |
| Inspection reports issued by FIC and supervisory bodies | 404 FIC and 739 supervisory bodies |
| Value of sanctions imposed | >R41 million |
| Financial intelligence reports disseminated | 3 114 |
| Responses to requests for financial intelligence | 2 300 |
| Proactive financial intelligence reports disseminated | 782 of which 131 related to high-priority matters |
| Financial intelligence reports on illicit financial flows | 32 |
| Value of suspected criminal proceeds frozen | R204 million |
| Proceeds preserved and recovered through Fusion Centre over two years since the inception of the Fusion Centre | >R1.75 billion |
| Value of proceeds of crime recovered, in which the FIC's financial intelligence was used | >R5.1 billion |
| Collaboration between SAMLIT and the Fusion Centre over the last two years led to the preservation and directives to freeze accounts to this amount | R86 million |