Crimes that affect the environment, such as wildlife and forest crime, crimes in the fisheries sector, illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals and waste, have a negative impact not only on the environment but also on the economy, security and human health. These crimes contribute to biodiversity loss and climate change, threatening the achievement of SDG 13.

Through the Global Programme on Crimes that Affect the Environment (GPCAE), UNODC assists Member States in preventing and responding to these crimes. The Office currently provides technical assistance to more than 40 countries. Thus, UNODC’s work in preventing and addressing crimes that affect the environment includes conducting assessments and evidence-based research; strengthening national legal and global normative frameworks; strengthening national capacities for investigation, prosecution and adjudication; raising awareness and sharing knowledge; fostering sustainable livelihoods development and social entrepreneurship; and coordinate inter-agency efforts.

To fulfil its mandate, UNODC works in partnership with Member States, UN Agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the conservation community, academia and the private sector. In line with it, UNODC is part of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), a coordinated global response to wildlife crime. The Office engages with academia, for example, to produce teaching material for the Teaching Module Series on Wildlife Crime, available at SHERLOC. This knowledge management portal facilitates the dissemination of information. Several databases, including case law and legislation databases, related to crimes that affect the environment can also be found in the portal.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

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UN entities work closely together to address the different targets and indicators of the 2030 Agenda.

Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
UNODC’s research also contributes to advancing knowledge on the issue. Among the latest publications are the World Wildlife Crime Report and Illegal Wildlife Trade and Climate Change: Joining the dots.

Further, the Office contributes to tackling climate change and achieving the SDGs through the Law Enforcement Assistance Programme to Reduce Tropical Deforestation (LEAP), a partnership between UNODC and INTERPOL that seeks to build technical capacity and networks to assist Member States in the fight against illegal deforestation and related crimes. LEAP’s timber identification and document fraud training for relevant law enforcement agencies, for example, has led to significant wood seizures, including CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) protected timber, in Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Lastly, recognizing climate change as one of the triggers for humanitarian crises that exacerbate vulnerability to trafficking in persons, UNODC through its GLO.ACT initiative, produced a policy brief on the gendered linkages between climate change, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. As a follow-up, UNODC is undertaking related research in partner countries and using recommendations from the policy brief to inform future programming to respond to trafficking in persons in the context of climate change.