

PRESS RELEASE

For the attention of environment and crime correspondents

For immediate release

Environmental crime: a threat to our future

LONDON. 13th October 2008

London-based undercover investigative NGO the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) this week issues a 'call to action' urging the international community to combat **organised environmental crime**, which it says is a serious and growing threat across the world.

In a new briefing paper, ***Environmental Crime - a Threat to Our Future***, EIA calls on governments, police forces, customs and United Nations agencies to recognise environmental-crime as a serious time-critical problem, and work together to mount a 'substantial, committed and sustained global response'.

Environmental crimes are illegal acts which directly harm the environment, and include the illegal trade in wildlife, smuggling of ozone-depleting and global-warming substances, illicit trade in hazardous waste, illegal fishing, illegal logging and the associated trade in stolen timber.

EIA, which has exposed environmental crime using undercover methods for 24 years, says its recent experience indicates environmental criminals are becoming more organised, building up networks to operate across international frontiers and using sophisticated techniques to move illegal goods around the world and launder the proceeds.

Environmental crime is often perceived as 'victimless', yet in reality it affects all of us, EIA says. These crimes lead to deforestation and habitat destruction, depriving communities of their livelihoods; cause ecological problems such as flooding; foster corruption and bad governance; and contribute to climate change, and at the same time generate tens of billions of dollars in profits for criminal enterprises.

Although many international bodies such as the UN General Assembly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Customs Organisation have recognised environmental crime as serious and transnational, EIA believes it is not taken seriously as other forms of organised crime because countries lack the political will to provide the resources to carry out enforcement.

Julian Newman, campaigns director of EIA, said: "Our report shows how organised criminals are looting the planet for a quick profit. It is time for the international community to step up and meet this threat head on. "

Antonio Mario Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, will speak at the launch of the report in Vienna on Tuesday at a side event of a UN meeting (see note). Mr Costa said: "At a time when climate change and environmental sustainability are such high priorities, it is shocking to think that there are criminals profiting from the destruction of our planet. This is not a victimless crime. On the contrary. Since we share one planet, damage to the environment anywhere in the world hurts us all".

Copies of the report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.eia-international.org/cgi/reports/reports.cgi?t=template&a=171>

The two minute web clip 'Our Planet Our Problem' can viewed at:

http://209.40.104.24/multimedia/Our_planet_Our_Problem_002.mov

**Broadcast quality footage, web clips
and still images can be provided on request**

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Notes for Editors

- **The Environmental Investigation Agency** was established in 1984 to investigate, expose and campaign against the illegal trade in wildlife and the destruction of our natural environment. Working undercover to expose international environmental crime -such as the illegal trade in wildlife, illegal logging and trade in timber species, and the world-wide trade in ozone depleting substances - EIA has directly brought about changes in international laws and the policies of governments, saving the lives of millions of rare and endangered animals and putting a stop to the devastating effects of environmental criminals. www.eia-international.org.
- ***Environmental crime - A Threat to Our Future*** will be presented to the fourth session of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNCTOC) in Vienna on Tuesday (Oct 14th) at an event organised by EIA to be addressed by the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr Antonio Maria Costa.

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