

MEDIA RELEASE

Ref No: 24/03/2022

A COMMON PURPOSE UNITES PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS TO STRANGLE ORGANISED CRIME TARGETING SOUTH AFRICA'S WILDLIFE

Thursday, 24 March 2022: The South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force (SAMLIT) today revealed that its public private partnership has seen several successes due to their collaborative efforts to disrupt financial crimes connected to the illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

A panel of SAMLIT members represented by the Directorate for Crime Prevention (Hawks), South Africa's financial intelligence unit, the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), and Investec, discussed how the SAMLIT platform facilitated information sharing which led to 12 arrests and 78 rhino horns, ivory and other wildlife products being seized. This achievement was attributed to the increased collaboration between the private and public sector. Cooperation with international agencies also led to the arrest of three people in foreign jurisdictions.

SAMLIT shared their successes with members of the South African chapter of United for Wildlife (UfW), the counter-IWT task force established and driven by His Royal Highness, Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, through the Royal Foundation. UfW hosted a meeting attended by representatives of the finance and transport industries, government, law enforcement and conservation organisations.

The collaborative partnership between UfW, SAMLIT members and the FIC was tested when at the end of 2021, 24 rhinos were killed in less than 48 hours. In response, SAMLIT, the FIC and UfW were able to support activities by the Hawks which included increased scrutiny at airports and marine ports. This led to the seizure of the horns before they left the country, and multiple arrests since.

"It takes a network to catch a network, and we have learnt that by joining forces and communicating through legal frameworks, we can be much more effective than by operating in silos," says Gerald Byleveld, Investec's Head of Financial Crimes Compliance, and head of SAMLIT's IWT expert working group.

Colonel Johan Jooste, National Section Commander of Wildlife Trafficking at the Hawks says: "Thanks to the backing of the private sector, we have seen how by adding financial crimes to wildlife charges, criminals can be more effectively prosecuted and get longer sentences."

The recent sentencing of Ping Wu, who was sentenced by the Thembisa Regional Court to five years imprisonment for money laundering linked to illegal rhino horn trafficking, is a significant example of the success of this approach.

SAMLIT aims to combat illegal wildlife trade by focusing on the financial flows that prop it up. Working in a multidisciplinary law enforcement task team including the FIC, law enforcement agencies were able to respond quickly to the situation in December, sharing comprehensive financial information on the arrested parties and suspects related to the investigations. Since the arrests, the SAMLIT multi-disciplinary law enforcement task team has taken up four separate related financial investigations with the relevant banks and the Hawks, and it is intended that by

the time the cases get to court, a number of financial crimes charges will have been added to the IWT cases.

“SAMLIT and the Southern African chapter of UfW are setting a brilliant example for other countries and regions of how collaboration, focus and commitment can make a positive difference for our communities and our planet,” says David Fein, United for Wildlife Financial Taskforce chair. “Two years of hard work have led to tangible results, and none too soon, as South Africa experienced a spike in rhino poaching late last year. The members of SAMLIT and the Southern Africa chapter of UfW responded with urgency, leading to seizures and arrests, and putting the traffickers of endangered species on notice. We were so pleased to return to Southern Africa last week and to share the experience of South Africa with other countries in the region.”

United for Wildlife recently co-hosted a conference about combatting IWT in Southern Africa with the British High Commission in Botswana, drawing representatives from Angola, Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, with the aim to expand the Southern African Regional Chapter. This chapter will work to enhance communications between South Africa and its neighbouring countries, to improve the effectiveness of investigations across borders. It will continue to work with UfW’s international financial and transport taskforces to share information and resources, strengthen existing partnerships and better respond to support local priorities. The regional chapters will then form a collaborative network across the globe, from the Middle East to the Americas.

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To arrange interviews with **SAMLIT Steering Committee Chairperson, Adv Xolisile Khanyile** or **Head of Investec Financial Crime Compliance, Gerald Byleveld**, please Click [HERE](#)

Note to editors:

SAMLIT (South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force) is a private-public partnership between the banking sector and government regulatory authorities, led by the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC). Started in December 2019, SAMLIT is aimed at enhancing collaboration and coordination in combating financial crime, money laundering and terrorist financing. Banking sector partners include domestic and international banks, and banking industry representatives SABRIC (South African Banking Risk information Centre) and BASA (The Banking Association South Africa). Regulatory authorities in the partnership include the South African Reserve Bank’s Prudential Authority and its Financial Surveillance Department, as well as the FIC.

The partnership enhances the effective, efficient, and timeous sharing of information with a view to improving analytical capabilities of regulatory authorities which in turn assists law enforcement in their investigations and application for asset forfeiture. Through its work SAMLIT also identifies specific types of behaviours and activities associated with different types of crimes. These typologies are intended to increase knowledge on and possibly pre-empt some types of criminal behaviour associated with the banking sector. For any queries about SAMLIT, please go to SAMLIT@fic.gov.za

Partners in SAMLIT:

Public sector members: Financial Intelligence Centre | South African Banking Risk Information Centre | The Banking Association South Africa | South African Reserve Bank (Financial Surveillance) and (Prudential Authority).

National and international banks and banking associations: Absa Group Limited | African Bank Limited | Albaraka Bank | Bank of China | Bank of Taiwan South Africa Branch | Bidvest Bank Limited | Capitec Bank Limited | China Construction Bank Corporation, JHB Branch | Citibank N.A., South Africa | Deutsche Bank AG, JHB Branch | Discovery Limited | Finbond Mutual Bank | FirstRand Bank | GBS Mutual Bank | Grindrod Bank Limited | Grobank Limited | HBZ Bank Limited | Habib Overseas Bank Limited | HSBC Bank | Investec Bank Limited | Nedbank Group Limited | Sasfin Bank Limited | Standard Chartered Bank | State Bank of India, South Africa | Standard Bank of South Africa Limited | TymeBank Limited.