



**NATURE CRIME
ALLIANCE**
people. planet. justice.

STRATEGY 2024-2027



The Nature Crime Alliance is a global, multi-sector network that raises political will, mobilises financial commitment, and bolsters operational capacity to fight nature crime. The Alliance Secretariat is hosted by the World Resources Institute (WRI) with participation from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

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PREFACE

Nature crime – illegal forms of logging, mining, land conversion, wildlife trade, and crimes associated with fishing – destroys ecosystems, harms vulnerable and Indigenous communities who most directly depend on natural resources, and is a critical but underappreciated barrier to justly and effectively addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, food security and the economies of states.

Global criminal syndicates, often linked to corrupt elements within governments and businesses, are key actors in nature crime. These crimes are frequently linked to other crimes, including but not limited to: drug and arms trafficking, financial crimes, fraud, corruption, and labour and human rights violations. Nature crime creates hugely profitable opportunities for organised crime, resulting in illegal markets for environmental goods. While the markets and supply chains affected by nature crime are transnational and global, much of the direct impact of nature crime is visited on areas of the planet most critical for conserving biodiversity, critical habitats, and ecosystem goods and services critical to the planet's ecological health and for human well-being.

While the natural resources targeted by these crimes lie largely in countries less equipped to counter nature crime, the beneficiaries, including traffickers, criminal syndicates, rogue corporations, financiers and consumers, often operate far from “the scene of the crime”, in major urban centers and markets around the world. Solutions to combat these sophisticated criminal networks and address the vulnerabilities in complex value chains, and in particular to prevent the crimes in the first place, must include: heightened political will; adequate legal frameworks; increased financing for nature crime prevention, detection and suppression; modern crime science; and more coordinated, multidisciplinary technical and operational capacity and action at national, regional, and transregional levels.

In response to the challenge of combating the threat of nature crime, the Nature Crime Alliance was launched in August 2023, hosted by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and co-chaired by the governments of Norway and the United States, following several years of broad stakeholder consultation and dialogue. Detailed documentation on the Alliance's goals, value proposition, governance and membership are available on the [Nature Crime Alliance website](#).

This document provides the Nature Crime Alliance strategy for 2024-2027. It focuses on:

- (a) vision
- (b) guiding principles
- (c) overarching objectives
- d) strategic approaches
- (e) implementation
- (f) monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Given the comprehensive research, policy analysis and consultation that have already gone into developing and launching the Alliance, the document does not “reinvent the wheel” but rather articulates the strategy that the Alliance is already beginning to implement. It does not re-open settled understandings on Alliance goals, structure, or governance. The Strategy is also not intended to guide all of the work of all Alliance members on nature crime, who each have their own strategies and mandates. It would be impossible and undesirable to attempt to arrive at consensus across such diverse stakeholders and institutions. Rather, it focuses on what the membership of the Alliance, supported by its Secretariat, can accomplish collectively, building on the respective institutional mandates, expertise, strengths, and networks of its members.



THE NATURE CRIME ALLIANCE

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VISION

The international community has set ambitious and essential goals for progress on the environment and human development for the year 2030. Sustainable Development Goals 14 (the Ocean), 15 (Life on Land), and 16 (Justice) in particular are unlikely to be achieved without significant progress on preventing, combating and reducing nature crime.

Similarly, the Goals and Targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework will not be met without tackling the criminal activities that undermine biodiversity conservation, economic development, the rule of law, and conservation efforts. Finally, the emissions reduction goal of the Paris Climate Agreement, which requires significant reliance on reducing emissions from deforestation, is unlikely to be achieved without reducing the key barriers to slowing deforestation posed by forest-related crime. If we cannot prevent and gain control of crime related to some of the Earth's most critical natural resources, we are unlikely to meet these goals that are so essential to the future of both planet and people.

The vision of the Nature Crime Alliance is:

By 2030, the Alliance has:

- (a) significantly raised political will and attention
- (b) increased financial resources for nature crime by an order of magnitude
- (c) mobilised cooperative action by diverse stakeholders to significantly and measurably reduce the level of nature crime affecting the planet's most critical ecosystems.

By working together, and demonstrating and scaling credible, measurable, and cooperative solutions, the Alliance can help prevent and significantly reduce nature crime and contribute to strengthening the rule of law to meet globally agreed environment and development goals.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The overarching goal of the Alliance is to mobilise cooperation and catalyse action, from the global to the local level, to reduce the level and severity of nature crime and the harm that it does to people and ecosystems. All Alliance members affirmatively subscribe to three Guiding Principles:



I. Combat Nature Crime and Associated Criminal Activities

Participants commit to take appropriate action within their own mandates and to support cooperative activities to combat nature crime and associated criminal activities, as well as address the underlying drivers of nature crime. This includes, *inter alia*:

- supporting the investigation and prosecution of criminal leaders and syndicates involved in nature crime and related organised crime;
- developing, implementing, and advocating for policies, regulations, and strategies aimed at tackling nature crime and/or addressing its underlying drivers; and
- deploying financial, technical, and human resources to build capacity to tackle nature crime and promote effective law enforcement.



II. Conserve Natural Ecosystems and Protected Species

Participants commit to conserve natural ecosystems, acknowledging the role they play in sustaining life on Earth. Participants commit to take appropriate actions to safeguard species and prevent the illegal export or import of protected species.



III. Respect Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Participants commit to comply with and implement relevant national law and international obligations, including those concerning internationally recognised human rights as appropriate. This may include taking affirmative steps to prevent, investigate, punish, and redress human rights abuses through effective policies, legislation, regulations and adjudication.

Participants commit to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, including those related to traditional knowledge, as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, relevant national legislation, treaties, and other agreements, including with respect to the concept of free, prior, and informed consent, as applicable.

OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

Consonant with the Guiding Principles, the Alliance's work focuses on achieving three overarching and mutually supportive objectives:

I. Raise political will to pursue the criminal actors and networks behind nature crime

The Alliance seeks to influence, support and work with governments to catalyse sustained action and resources. With many competing agendas clamoring for governments' attention, prioritising the battle against nature crime requires not only leadership from within government and support from international organisations, but also strong, sustained and complementary action by civil society to expose the extent and impact of nature crime, and to work to prevent it.

II. Mobilise financing to accelerate the fight against nature crime

The Alliance is not a funding entity *per se*, and membership does not give rise to any financial obligations. Rather, the Alliance's objective is to mobilise greatly enhanced financial support from all sources (public, private, domestic and international) for initiatives, partnerships, and organisations engaged in the fight against nature crime. The Alliance will therefore work to mobilise all types of funding to strengthen efforts to fight nature crime.

III. Bolster operational capacity and cooperation to address nature crime

The "supply side" of nature crime finance, however, is only part of this challenge. Ensuring increased funding actually flows to effective government and civil society organisations pursuing impactful approaches is critical as well. For assistance to be effective, governments must create an enabling policy and institutional environment that minimizes corruption and waste, enhances transparency and accountability, and ensures that funds flow to those elements of the government structure directly engaged in the investigation of and action against nature crime.

Enhanced political will and increased financing need ultimately to support action in particular places to prevent, deter, detect and sanction nature crime, as well as closely associated financial crimes, corruption, and labour and human rights violations. This of course includes support for investigative, national environmental enforcement units, rangers, and judicial authorities within governments. But it must also focus on building cooperative bridges across government agencies and geographies, and between enforcement authorities, the private sector, the media, and civil society.

The criminal chain behind nature crimes may involve legally registered businesses which society does not generally categorise as "criminal", and may indeed be unwitting victims themselves. But persuasive evidence demonstrates that in many cases, "criminal" actors are not always distinct and separate from legally-constituted business entities.

It is critical that the Alliance support and leverage the mandates, existing programmes, and networks of its members and work to amplify rather than duplicate established efforts. The Alliance's goal must be to leverage and coordinate the distinctive competencies and mandates of its diverse membership such that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Technological innovation and uptake are also a critical part of achieving this objective. While the Alliance is not a direct implementor of action against nature crime, it will connect and catalyse its membership to do so in innovative and effective ways. One of the primary benefits of the Alliance targeting nature crimes as a whole is the ability to identify where and how to leverage resources and expertise related to combating one type of crime to also focus on other crimes, at their points of convergence.



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Building on several years of extensive multi-stakeholder consultations as well as the many initiatives already underway related to various aspects of nature crime, the Alliance focuses on six Strategic Approaches:

I. Strengthening nature crime law enforcement effectiveness

A key aim of the Alliance is to amplify coordination between the key players fighting nature crime; governments, law enforcement agencies, frontline defenders, and civil society. The goal is to (a) foster a more collaborative and inter-sectoral approach to preventing, deterring, detecting, and prosecuting nature crime (“the law in action”); (b) mobilise capacity-building assistance to increase effectiveness of enforcement units and train of prosecutors and judicial authorities; and (c) strengthen and/or reform national and international legal frameworks (“the law on the books”) where necessary. To these ends, the Alliance will convene and connect relevant stakeholders (e.g., investigative, prosecution, and judicial authorities; regulatory, customs, and environmental authorities; academic and technical experts; civil society), and build on existing initiatives, as appropriate, to:

- Support effective enforcement action and develop practical solutions and partnerships to overcome barriers to strengthening nature crime law enforcement. Examples of such barriers may include: insufficient intelligence sharing and operational coordination between agencies within government; lack of effective mechanisms for transboundary and/or international communication and cooperation; insufficient communication and cooperation with civil society; lack of funding; inadequately trained personnel; and, in some cases, political interference by vested interests and/or corruption.
- Identify and remedy key gaps or weakness in national legal frameworks and support implementation of relevant existing international conventions (e.g., CITES, UNTOC, UNCAC) and participation in other international cooperation mechanisms and processes (e.g., Wildlife Enforcement Networks, FATF, etc.). At the national level gaps may relate to rules of standing, procedure and evidence, the nature of available sanctions and other disruptive tools, or laws and regulations governing the civil service. There may also be substantive gaps in the national laws of countries, as well as lack of coherence between different countries’ legal provisions and procedures (e.g., forms of nature crime that are illegal in one country but not in a neighbouring country). The Alliance will also facilitate comparative dialogue and learning among countries on different legal approaches and regimes for addressing nature crime, building on existing legislative guidelines and best practices.

II. Empowering and mobilising civil society organisations and frontline defenders

The Alliance recognises the pivotal role played by frontline defenders and civil society organisations in the battle against nature crime. Supporting their efforts and scaling successful initiatives is therefore a key strategic priority area. Many Alliance members are already engaged in direct support to and cooperation with grassroots environmental defender organisations, and in working to hold to account governments and corporations that intimidate or obstruct environmental defenders’ efforts. The Alliance itself, as an entity, will not engage in this kind of direct support, but rather will amplify the efforts of frontline defenders and work to connect them with non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations (NGOs and IGOs), funders, and enforcement authorities.

A key objective will be to strengthen financial and technical support for frontline defenders including Indigenous Peoples and those from local communities, while fostering greater cooperation among independent civil society organisations, governments, and law enforcement. The Alliance will support the development of funding models and mechanisms to mobilise financial support to these groups.

An important part of this work will involve engaging with frontline defenders to ensure their perspectives are considered in shaping strategies to counter nature criminals on a local level, and to work to prevent the crimes in the first place. This includes developing culturally inclusive and equitable solutions that respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the interests of local communities, and which ensure that Alliance efforts focus on transnational criminal organisations and networks. The Alliance will also serve as a support network for frontline defenders, committed to sharing best practices, offering solutions to specific challenges, and linking to training and capacity-building opportunities. In particular, the Alliance will develop a legal referral service as part of its online presence, for the purpose of connecting legal entities that offer pro bono legal support with environmental defenders who need legal assistance, whether to press cases against particular illegal activities or to defend themselves against the human rights aggressions of organised criminal groups or others in league with those groups.



III. Mobilising innovative tools and technology to combat nature crime

In the ongoing battle against nature crime, digital tools and innovative technologies have become indispensable assets. From real-time satellite monitoring that detects illegal deforestation, mining operations, or illicit fishing activity, to artificial intelligence and blockchain solutions that enhance supply chain security and transparency, these advancements are reshaping the fight against perpetrators of nature crime.

The Alliance will convene industry innovators and frontline actors to explore the role of technology solutions in preventing, deterring, detecting, disrupting, and ultimately countering nature crime. This could include partnerships to accelerate the deployment of tools and technologies by frontline defenders. The Alliance will also act as an amplifier of successful solutions, so that tools and technology that have been proven to help in certain contexts are scaled to other regions or crime types.

Areas where the Alliance will add value in this space includes the development with partners of a “Library of Tools” platform that brings together the wide range of innovative solutions to fight nature crime in one place. This will provide frontline defenders, investigators, law enforcement, and other actors involved in countering perpetrators of nature crime with access to a once-stop shop on tools, and training on how to effectively use them, that can aid their work. The private sector has a key role to play in this area, and the Alliance will actively build partnerships with businesses in the innovation space who share the Alliance’s ambition to end nature crime worldwide.



IV. Detecting and disrupting financial crimes connected to nature crime

Perpetrators of nature crime rely in large part on the formal financial sector to launder their proceeds.¹ Targeting financial crimes and disrupting illicit financial flows are therefore highly effective ways of stopping nature crime. This strategic approach will develop a more consolidated response to financial crimes linked to nature crime by developing solutions to help practitioners better identify and disrupt illicit financial flows.

The Alliance will convene governments, law enforcement organisations, financial intelligence units (FIUs), civil society organisations, and financial institutions to facilitate secure dialogues in which information and best practice can be shared, with the goal of disrupting financial networks involved in nature crimes. This may include one or more Working Groups, facilitated by the Alliance Secretariat that will produce information documents and reports which list red flags, risk indicators, algorithms, and criteria that support FIUs and the private sector in detecting and analysing suspicious transactions and activities associated with nature crimes.

Qualitative reporting by the private financial sector and other reporting entities showing that they have an increased awareness of suspicious activity, and that FIUs report a significant increase in timely and quality suspicious activity reports may be one indicator of success. The closure of accounts and denial of financial services to individuals and entities suspected of involvement in crimes affecting the environment may also be an indicator of effective performance as well as qualitative indicators that these individuals and entities feel deterred from using the formal financial system.

This strategic priority area will make conditions increasingly challenging for those engaged in financial crime linked to nature crime (an element of prevention) as well as increasing the perception of regulatory risk among financial service providers. The Alliance will do this by supporting the strengthening of collaboration and information sharing between NGOs, the private sector, and financial institutions, and by raising awareness amongst FIUs, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector of the modus operandi of perpetrators of nature crime, associated trade flows, and financial crimes.

Working through its partnerships with UNODC, INTERPOL, FIUs and financial institutions, the Alliance will support the development of working groups focused on specific geographies where financial crime relating to nature crime is particularly prevalent. As this work proceeds, the Alliance will support the development of new partnerships with additional private sector entities and governments, law enforcement, and CSOs in these geographies.

1. Organised criminal networks also rely on longstanding informal financial networks and strategies as well, such as the Hawala network of money brokers, cash couriers, fraudulent use of remittance systems, etc.

V. Prioritising the focus on nature crime “choke points” in the global economy

Investigative and enforcement resources – human and financial – will always be in short supply, relative to the size and complexity of the global nature crime economy. It is therefore critical to identify and focus resources on critical “choke points” in the flows of goods, people, and wealth moving around in the global economy. “Choke points” refers to narrow or congested places within flows of people, goods, or finance. With respect to nature crime, such places exist in both the material world (for example, ports, airports, border crossings) as well as in the digital worlds of finance and data flows. By identifying and better securing such choke points in supply chains for products like timber, seafood, wildlife, and gold, investigative and enforcement resources can be deployed much more efficiently.

A key focus will be on exploring ways to bolster operational capacity for detection and evidence-gathering at vulnerable, high-impact physical and virtual (i.e., online marketplaces) supply chain choke points. To do so, the Alliance will convene governments, customs and law enforcement agencies, coast guards, selected IGOs and NGOs, and innovators to develop and disseminate solutions that will translate into increased seizures and arrests. This could include enhanced training activities to enable law enforcement/border agencies to identify evidence of nature crime, particularly in instances of convergence with other crimes, and the collation and reporting of best practice/case studies that can inform enforcement efforts in other jurisdictions.



VI. Strategic communications to raise the public and political profile of the nature crime challenge

In order to increase political will to fight nature crime, the Alliance aims to continuously shine a light on the gravity of – and solutions to – nature crime by amplifying the ongoing work of partners, creating high-impact knowledge products, and delivering novel and compelling messaging. The Alliance will bring together journalists, communications professionals, front-line actors, and other interested parties, including law enforcement agencies, to explore ways to amplify success stories and support practitioners in their vital work.

Workstreams will include support to journalists in using new tools and technologies (such as geospatial monitoring) to improve their reporting, and training to better align journalists’ efforts with the work of law enforcement authorities and of investigative CSOs. The Alliance will also hold convenings to explore effective ways to get more people – especially policymakers – talking publicly about nature crime and the need to fight it. The Alliance will explore potential media partnerships that take local stories to international newsrooms in order to reach bigger audiences and develop tools or platforms that can better connect frontline defenders with stories to tell with the journalists seeking stories to cover.

As well as building capacity through these initiatives, the Alliance will also support media organisations in their efforts to access funding opportunities to expand their level of effort reporting on nature crime.



IMPLEMENTATION

The Alliance does not fight nature crime directly; rather, it brings together those that are doing so to improve collaboration, coordination, and catalyse joint action. The “how” of the Alliance’s work – the key tactics and methods through which the Alliance will work, include the following:

I. Working Groups

An important component to how the Alliance will operate is through the establishment and facilitation of Alliance Working Groups (WGs) – convenings that provide a structured mechanism to facilitate the collaboration, communication and coordination that is needed to develop solutions to specific challenges. Any member may suggest WG topics and nominate experts for working group participation. The Steering Committee will advise the Secretariat on WG prioritisation.

Working groups will focus on topics lying within the Alliance’s six Strategic Approaches and will be convened by invitation only. Alliance members will be prioritised for invitations but where necessary, the Secretariat and Working Group Chairs will draw on expertise from individuals and organisations not members of the Alliance. WG sessions will take place at regular intervals with administration delivered by the Alliance Secretariat, which will also ensure that the sessions make progress towards delivering practical solutions. Where useful, these sessions will be convened off-the-record (Chatham House Rule) to enable free and frank discussion between participants.

WGs are a core offer to Alliance members, as they will provide an opportunity to deepen and magnify WG members’ focus and capacities around specific nature crime issues and challenges. WGs should be particularly valuable for governments, as they will also enable sector-specific agencies of governments to participate and benefit at a technical level with respect to the area of their own mandate and expertise.

“Working Groups” in the Alliance context are not intended to be “talk shops” and are not generally intended to be permanent, standing bodies. Rather, they are time-bound, action-oriented, relatively small multi-stakeholder groups drawn together around a particular part of the nature crime challenge and committed to developing and carrying out actionable solutions, in areas where such initiatives do not already exist. Nor will all Alliance WGs look the same or employ the same structure and modality. Function will determine form. Some may be global in character but then spin off regional or sub-regional groups, as was the case with the Financial Crimes Working Group (formally the “Private Sector Dialogue on Disrupting Financial Crime Linked to Environmental Crime”). Some convenings on sensitive topics, such as law enforcement cooperation, might be restricted to mainly government representatives and a few non-governmental external resources persons.



II. Catalysing implementation partnerships

With its diverse membership and networks, spanning governments, intergovernmental processes and institutions, NGOs, the media, and centres of policy and technical excellence, a core function of the Alliance will be to incubate productive new partnerships to combat nature crime, across sectors, crime types, and geographies.

The USAID-funded Countering Nature Crime (CNC) consortium, a five-year program established in late 2023, is an example in this regard, bringing together \$25 million in funding from Alliance member the United States and technical, policy and implementation expertise of Alliance members World Resources Institute, Environmental Investigation Agency, Wildlife Conservation Society and the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership. CNC works with governments and stakeholders across key geographies and supply chains, including the Amazon and Congo Basins, Southeast Asia, and key markets in Europe, North America, and East Asia. Focused on illegal logging, deforestation, fishing and wildlife trade, the CNC partnership also addresses associated financial crime and corruption, as well as the empowerment of Indigenous and other “front-line defenders.” In addition, CNC is also directly funding the establishment and operation of Alliance Working Groups.

There are many potential variations on this model, of course. In particular, the Alliance will work to build or expand initiatives already underway through members such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the UN Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC). If in the time period of this Strategy, the Alliance could catalyse more implementation partnerships of comparable magnitude, that would constitute a significant outcome and contribution to the Alliance’s Overarching Objectives.



III. Decision support tools and services

Drawing on its membership and the knowledge gained through its Working Groups, the Alliance will organise and disseminate information on policy- and action-relevant resources, tools and technologies to support action on nature crime by States and other stakeholders. Linkage to these resources will be through the Alliance website as well as proactive communications outreach to the membership. Key resources will include written technical and policy decision-support materials (e.g., on innovative tools and technologies); links to critical output on nature crime from journalists and other media sources; a legal assistance referral portal to connect this in need of *pro bono* nature crime-related legal analysis, defense and support; a roster of subject matter experts and practitioners aimed at law enforcement authorities, journalists and front-line defenders; drawing on the above the Alliance Secretariat, in partnership with its members, will support countries in assessing nature crime response needs; strengthening laws, policies, protections, and judicial capacity; mobilising action; and monitoring results.

Experience with decision support tools such as Global Forest Watch has taught that “build it and they will come” is an insufficient strategy for ensuring the update of decision support tools and information, particularly with respect to investigative and law enforcement authorities, which can be resistant to innovation and change. The Alliance will therefore work through its membership, particularly those members on the cutting edge of technological innovation, to proactively connect new knowledge and innovative solutions with those who most need it to combat nature crime.



MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The Alliance progress will systematically monitor and evaluate progress in three ways:

- Assess progress of the Alliance Secretariat in carrying out the functions and tasks mandates set by its terms of reference as well as more specific results frameworks developed in cooperation with key donors. To do this, the Alliance will develop specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals for each strategic approach, to facilitate more focused efforts and allow for the transparent tracking of progress.
- Commission periodic (e.g., biennial) independent external evaluations of the Alliance's performance and progress, beginning in 2024. These evaluations will draw on both quantitative data and qualitative assessments of Alliance members, donors and stakeholder; and
- In the longer term monitor external "impact indicators" on the state of efforts to combat nature crime, using externally generated tools such as the Corruption Perceptions Index, the Organized Crime Index, Global Witness annual reports on environmental defender intimidation and fatalities, the World Wildlife Crime reports and other sources. These are not outcomes that the Alliance can control or even, in some places, necessarily appreciably influence. But they are important to monitor in order to understand what, over time, seems to be working and what is not, in the collective efforts of Alliance members to reduce nature crime.



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