

MEDIA RELEASE

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IN-DEPTH REPORT ABOUT FINANCIAL FLOWS ASSOCIATED WITH ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Tuesday, 16 November 2021: Role players in the ecosystem of illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products have been profiled through the work of the South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force (SAMLIT).

These various actors, and the methods they use for illegal wildlife trade (IWT) have been captured in a report, compiled by an expert working group in SAMLIT which focuses on the money flows related to this trade.

SAMLIT was established in 2019 by the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), as a public-private partnership between the banking sector and sector regulatory authorities. SAMLIT provides a platform for members to centralise information sharing, with a view to ensuring that necessary steps be taken to prevent, detect, investigate, and prosecute priority crimes in the financial sector. Across the globe, these types of partnerships have increasingly been hailed as the best suited response to address financial crimes.

Lead of the expert working group, formed in 2020, that developed the report is head of Investec's Financial Crime Compliance, Gerald Byleveld: "By collaborating to identify suspicious and unusual transactions, as well as the networks exposed when perpetrators use the financial system, we can preserve South Africa's rich natural heritage by bringing these criminals to book."

The work of SAMLIT has been commended by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Cambridge Prince William in his role as President of the Royal Foundation's United for Wildlife, which has supported the expert working group.

In a letter to SAMLIT, Prince William wrote: "This report and related initiatives by SAMLIT and the expert working group are great examples of how – by bringing the public and private sectors together – we can deliver a significant blow to the growing illegal trade in wildlife that is such a threat to our planet. I hope other countries will follow the leadership and commitment shown by you and your colleagues in South Africa, and I look forward to our continued partnership."

The World Economic Forum has identified IWT as one of the most lucrative criminal enterprises globally, valued between US\$7 and \$23 billion annually. In this milieu, with its diverse wildlife, South Africa is a source and transit point for the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products.

The report was compiled using research comprising stakeholder interviews, survey results from South African banks and money remitters, through data mining suspicious and unusual transactions and activity reports, and by reviewing investigated cases. Through this work, profiles of the role players from the point of sourcing wildlife and wildlife products to their eventual export were identified. The report and its findings are important and will be critical for creating awareness about the illegal wildlife trade.

Central to the report is that it also helps identify those involved in the money flows associated with IWT. The research confirmed, for example, that cash is used extensively in this trade at lower levels, and that perpetrators include game rangers, vets, casino staff, construction and transport industry workers, as well as customs and other government officials. It also revealed that payment methods and laundering tactics become much more sophisticated further up the supply chain.

Wildlife products most popularly traded out of South Africa include rhino horn, abalone, and pangolin, with ivory being moved through South Africa in transit to the East, with China and other Asian countries representing the largest markets. Pangolins are currently the most trafficked mammal as their meat is considered a delicacy, their scales are used in traditional medicine and their skin processed into leather products.

“This IWT report is a critical body of work, which proves that collaboration is the only way to fulfil SAMLIT’s objectives to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in combating financial crime. We are also encouraged, as this report proves what is possible in the future.” says SAMLIT Steering Committee Chairperson, Adv Xolisile Khanyile.

Please click [HERE](#) to access the full report about Financial Flows Associated with Illegal Wildlife Trade in South Africa.

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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 contact:

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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.