

December 20, 2014

Hon. Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Hon. John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Hon. Eric Holder
Attorney General of the United States
950 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Re: Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking

Dear Secretaries Jewell and Kerry and General Holder:

We are writing to you in your capacity as the co-Chairs of the cabinet-level Wildlife Trafficking Task Force, which the President established on July 1 of this year, pursuant to Executive Order 13647. That same Executive Order established the Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking, a group of non-governmental experts that the President has asked to provide expert advice and input into your Task Force. We are serving as the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council.

It is our understanding that the Task Force intends to submit a draft “National Strategy on Wildlife Trafficking” document to the White House by December 28 for consideration and potential approval. To assist in your deliberations, we have described below – in summary form – a few of the key points that the Advisory Council discussed in the public meeting that it held earlier this week, and which we believe should be addressed in the National Strategy document. These important points are as follows:

- Advisory Council members spoke strongly in favor of a domestic prohibition on ivory sales in the United States, as did many members of the public. A bright line would help consumers understand the rules, and would remove the ability of criminals to use the law’s current ambiguities to their advantage.
- Additional legal tools to enhance enforcement and increase the incentives to stop wildlife trafficking should be actively considered and, if appropriate, adopted, including upgrading the legal status of wildlife crimes (categories, penalties, etc.) and applying other enforcement-related tools to penalize the

- syndicates that are perpetrating wildlife crimes, such as the freezing of assets, requiring restitution payments to range nations, and the like.
- Advisory Council members emphasized the importance of adopting an integrated, “whole of government” approach to combatting wildlife trafficking.
 - Budgeting must reflect the whole-of-government approach. Wildlife trafficking budgets should be identified, prioritized and integrated -- perhaps through the preparation of a budget “cross-cut” by OMB -- to reflect the President’s commitment to address the issue on a government-wide basis.
 - All agencies must work together to respond effectively to the requests for assistance that have been made by range nations.
 - In particular, because wildlife trafficking has serious national security implications, it may be appropriate to employ Department of Defense resources to assist in training and interdiction. Policies that may impede the use of such resources should be reevaluated in light of the scope of the crisis and the involvement of international syndicates, including groups with terrorist ties.
 - Likewise, as a follow-on to the review ordered by former Secretary of State Clinton, the federal government’s intelligence community should track major international wildlife trafficking activities and coordinate its efforts with appropriate law enforcement agencies.
 - The Advisory Council noted that it would be useful to identify and share information about successful anti-poaching efforts. Currently, there is no centralized information portal that draws attention to “best practices” and success stories. It would be useful to develop such a portal. International efforts to educate consumers and the use of diplomatic “carrots and sticks” will play a critical role in reducing demand in consuming nations, including the United States. The Advisory Council encourages the Department of State to continue to focus on these issues, and it stands ready to assist in those efforts.

The Advisory Council recommends that the National Strategy include clear goals, deliverables, and timelines on these, and other, key issues. The Advisory discussed many more aspects of the wildlife trafficking crisis in its first meeting, and it looks forward to continuing to provide input to the Presidential Task Force as it proceeds to implement the President’s Executive Order.

Sincerely,

/s/

Judith McHale, Chair
David J. Hayes, Vic-Chair