

Key points by Davyth Stewart, Interpol, at “Green Carbon, Black Trade” side event at World’s Forest Week on 27 September 2012

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### **Background to INTERPOL**

INTERPOL is the world’s largest police organization.

INTERPOL supports all agencies whose mandate is to combat crime – including national police services, customs and border control and wildlife enforcement services.

- (i) Build the law enforcement capacity through training
- (ii) Secure communication channels for sharing criminal intelligence
- (iii) Criminal analysis and expert guidance
- (iv) Provide logistical support and intelligence sharing between police in different countries, in cross-border police operations.

Facilitate law enforcement co-operation even where diplomatic relations do not exist.

We have a dedicated environmental crime unit – focussing on wildlife crime, pollution and illegal logging.

### **Overview of Project LEAF**

1. Project LEAF is a reflection of how serious INTERPOL views illegal logging and forestry crime.
2. According to the INTERPOL and UNEP report, *Green Carbon, Black trade*, forestry crime is a US\$30billion a year illegal industry that is seriously undermining countries’ attempts to implement REDD+ and national and international strategies to protect their forests and implement sustainable forestry practices.
3. Tackling illegal logging should be the first step in implementing REDD+. Even the best forest management policies will be ineffective unless complemented by enforcement mechanisms that help assure compliance.
4. Illegal logging is a reflection of weak forest governance, with rates of illegal logging being a direct indicator of a country’s ability to regulate and manage its forest industry.
5. Highest rates of deforestation occur in same regions where illegal logging is at its worst – in the tropical forests of the Amazon Basin, Central Africa, and Southeast Asia.
6. Project LEAF was launched earlier this year as a consortium initiative led by INTERPOL, with the United Nations Environment Programme, and with financial assistance from the Norwegian Agency for Development.

7. Project LEAF focuses on the organised criminal networks behind forestry crime and large-scale illegal logging
8. The same routes used to smuggle timber across countries are often used to smuggle weapons, drugs and people. Indeed, forestry crime often occurs hand in hand with other offences such as corruption of officials, fraud, money laundering, extortion, violence and even murder.
9. A significant proportion of illegal logging is carried out by organized criminal networks, given its high profitability and relative low risk of apprehension. To dismantle these criminal networks, law enforcement must target the individuals who are at the top of the networks.
10. These people can be identified by following the money, and confiscating the illegal logging profits. They are rarely the ones out in the forest with a chainsaw. Law enforcement needs to look past low-level criminals and look at where the profits from illegal logging go. By following the money trail to go after the *dirty money* it is possible to pursue those at the top of the criminal organizations engaged in large-scale illegal logging.
11. Following the money trail is often the best way to uncover the criminal networks. And of course, once criminal proceeds are located, prosecution authorities should focus on seizing those assets. Large-scale illegal logging is a profit-motivated crime, and therefore confiscating the money is an effective way to target the criminals “where it hurts”.
12. An international, coordinated law enforcement response is essential. Illegal logging is not restricted by national borders. Timber may be illegally cut in one place, smuggled across borders and processed elsewhere. Illicit proceeds are banked and transferred to a third country.
13. The trans-national nature of illegal logging raises difficulties for law enforcement and regulators, who are often limited in their ability to work outside their own domestic jurisdiction.
14. INTERPOL is supporting countries to establish *National Environmental Security Taskforces*. These are multi-agency task forces that bring together different law enforcement agencies with responsibility for tackling forestry crime.
15. Forestry crime is multi-disciplinary, involving issues of illegal logging, trespass, smuggling timber across borders, tax evasion, fraud and money laundering. Tackling this crime requires police, prosecutors, customs, forestry authorities and financial and tax regulators.
16. By bringing these agencies together in a national multi-agency approach, it not only ensures effective compliance and enforcement through cooperation, but it increases transparency and oversight between the agencies and reduces the risk that corrupt officials in one agency may block effective law enforcement efforts.