

# Interpol announces special team to combat illegal ivory trafficking

October 7 2014

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Kenyan police officers look on June 5, 2014 at 302 pieces of ivory, including 228 elephant tusks, seized the day before in a warehouse raid in the port city of Mombosa

International police organisation Interpol announced Tuesday it would establish a team to target ivory trafficking and more generally, environmental crime, in Africa.

The new team, based in Nairobi, will help further the organisation's

Project Wisdom, which combats elephant and rhinoceros poaching and the [illegal trade](#) of ivory.

"The global fight against [illegal trafficking](#) has just been given a significant boost," said Australian High Commissioner Geoff Tooth as the initiative was unveiled at the Australian High Commission in Kenya.

David Higgins, head of Interpol's Environmental Security Unit said that the team will help eastern African countries in their fight against "significant transnational animal trafficking cases."

There is a large market for ivory in Asia, where it is often used in traditional medicine to treat a variety of ailments ranging from fevers to nosebleeds.

According to the World Wildlife Fund, the African elephant population has dropped from 3 to 5 million to approximately 400,000 over the last century.

In Kenya, the [elephant population](#) dropped by 85 percent between 1973 and 1989.

Kenya is part of the "gang of 19" countries identified by CITES, the international regulatory body for trade in wildlife, as not doing enough to curb [trafficking](#). Other countries include Tanzania, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, China, and Egypt.

On October 4, hundreds of Kenyans marched to demand that the government take action against rhino and elephant poaching. Similar protests, dubbed the Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, took place all over the world.

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