

PRESS BRIEFING INVITE: World Wildlife Fund joining forces with major African religious leaders to help stop illegal wildlife trade

WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and ARC (The Alliance of Religions and Conservation) are announcing a first-ever partnership with faith leaders from across Africa to take a stand against illegal wildlife trade in their country. This unprecedented event marks an extraordinary moment for wildlife in Africa. For the first time ever, African religious leaders from different faiths are coming together and calling for the end of illegal wildlife trade and signing commitment statements pledging their support to protect wildlife from poachers.

“This is a moral issue above all others,” says Dekila Chungyalpa, WWF’s Sacred Earth program director. “The slaughter of elephants and rhinos in Africa should be treated as a serious crime. Faith leaders are the heart and backbone of local communities. They guide and direct the way we think, behave and live our lives. While faith has always supported teachings about protecting creation, this will be the first time major faiths of Christian, Hindu and Muslim leaders will unite to protect wildlife species.”

Poaching for international trade is the greatest threat to many endangered species, jeopardizing decades of conservation work and threatening animals’ survival. Rhino poaching in South Africa has increased more than 3,000 percent in the last five years. Poachers wipe out tens of thousands of African elephants every year. 2011 saw the highest recorded rates of killings on the continent in more than two decades and the largest scale illegal ivory seizures than anytime in recorded history (equaling the tusks from more than 4,000 dead elephants). Tanzania and Kenya function as major conduits through which large-scale illegal ivory goods are moved through the Congo Basin to international Asian markets including Vietnam, Thailand and China.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **Dekila Chungyalpa (WWF-US Sacred Earth Program Director)** Ms. Chungyalpa will speak about the World Wildlife Fund’s illegal wildlife trade campaign.
- **Sam Weru (WWF-Kenya Conservation Director)** Mr. Weru will outline the scope of the illegal wildlife trade crisis in Africa.
- **Martin Palmer (ARC Secretary General)** Mr. Palmer will address why ARC and WWF are working with religious leaders on this issue.
- **Patrick Maina (Reverend Presbyterian Church of East Africa / Kenya)** Mr. Maina will speak about his commitment statement and why he is personally joining WWF and ARC’s fight to protect Kenya’s wildlife.
- **Imam Kasozi (Chairman Director Assembly Energizing Solutions / Uganda)** Mr. Kasozi will speak about his commitment statement and why he is personally joining WWF and ARC’s fight to protect Kenya’s wildlife.
- **Preetika Bhanderi (Hindu Council of Africa)** Ms. Bhanderi will speak about his commitment statement and why he is personally joining WWF and ARC’s fight to protect Kenya’s wildlife.

A brief Q & A with reporters will follow.

WHEN: Friday, September 21st at 10am

WHERE: Sarova Panafric Hotel / Kenyatta Avenue

HANDOUT MATERIALS INCLUDE:

- Copies of signed commitment statements by Christian, Hindu and Muslim faith leaders
- WWF fact sheets on illegal wildlife trade crime in Africa
- Photographs and video available for download from religious leader safari in Nairobi

MORE INFORMATION

- Please go to the WWF international [illegal wildlife trade](http://www.panda.org/illegal-wildlife-trade) site to learn more about WWF's campaign
- WWF illegal wildlife trade photos available for download:

- Overall Campaign Photos: <https://photos.panda.org/gpn/external?albumId=4270>
- African Elephants: <https://photos.panda.org/gpn/external?albumId=4273>
- African Rhinos: <https://photos.panda.org/gpn/external?albumId=4272>
- Anti-poaching Patrol and Ivory Burn in Gabon:
<https://photos.panda.org/gpn/external?albumId=4277>

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