

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 23, 2017

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the
Department of State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the
Department of State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

As you develop the FY 2018 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (SFOPS), we urge you to maintain funding for programs that address the global crisis of wildlife trafficking and support international conservation: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and U.S. State Department programs to combat wildlife trafficking, the USAID Biodiversity Program, and the Global Environment Facility. We thank you for your previous support for these programs and urge you to continue strong funding for solutions to these threats.

The illegal trade in endangered wildlife products, including elephant ivory, rhino horn, pangolins, tiger parts, shark fins, turtle shells and other parts, is worth an estimated \$8–10 billion annually. Increasing profits and low deterrence associated with wildlife trafficking is attracting the involvement of highly organized criminal syndicates—the same syndicates trafficking in drugs, guns and people. There is also significant evidence that the poaching of African elephants for illegal ivory is helping finance insurgencies and groups with terrorist ties. Poaching and trafficking are not only pushing vulnerable species toward extinction, but are fueling corruption and weakening the rule of law in these countries that rely heavily on natural resources for economic growth and stability.

The National Strategy for Combatting Wildlife Trafficking outlines a whole-of-government approach to “strengthen enforcement, reduce demand, and increase cooperation” in response to a growing poaching crisis driven and facilitated by transnational organized crime. Just last year, the U.S. policy on combating wildlife trafficking motivated the Government of China to announce a domestic ivory ban to be implemented by the end of 2017. The U.S. Congress has also directed funding to combat wildlife trafficking in SFOPS since FY 2014. In addition, last year Congress passed the bipartisan END Wildlife Trafficking Act (P.L. 114-231), which reinforces and builds on the work already being implemented under the strategy. In February 2017, the new Administration updated the U.S. Transnational Organized Crime Strategy to

include wildlife trafficking, a recognition that the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products is carried out by the same highly organized criminal syndicates that often traffic in other illicit commodities targeted in the Strategy.

We thank you for your support for efforts to combat wildlife poaching and trafficking in the FY 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act, including \$90.7 million to the State Department and USAID to combat wildlife trafficking, \$265 million for the USAID Biodiversity Program, and \$146.6 million for the Global Environment Facility. It is critical that existing programs and funding be maintained to ensure investments realize significant anti-poaching, anti-trafficking and demand reduction impacts.

Combating Wildlife Trafficking Programs at the Department of State and USAID

We want to thank you for including \$90.7 million in dedicated funding for combating wildlife poaching and trafficking in FY 2017, including \$50.7 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds. This support has seen results in anti-poaching, anti-trafficking and reducing demand for illegal wildlife and products. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) has been able to train 1,000 law enforcement and judicial officials leading to 376 arrests and the seizure of 4.4 tons of ivory and rhino horn. Additionally, USAID has invested in 65 projects in 25 countries focused on strengthening anti-poaching and wildlife law enforcement, strengthening judicial systems and rule of law, disrupting transit hubs, and reducing consumer demand for illegal wildlife products. We urge you to maintain level funding for programs directed towards combating poaching and wildlife trafficking in FY 2018.

USAID Biodiversity Programs

Most U.S. foreign assistance for on-the-ground conservation is delivered through USAID and its robust portfolio of conservation and forestry programs. These help protect some of the largest, most at-risk natural landscapes and the livelihoods of millions of people who directly depend on natural resources for their survival and economic growth. These programs work in partnership with foreign governments, civil society, the private sector, and local communities to address direct threats to wildlife loss and the underlying drivers of species extinction. While most effort is focused on biologically significant areas, USAID also strengthens policies, raises public awareness, and tackles global challenges like wildlife trafficking. By maintaining and restoring the natural resources that supply fertile soil, clean water, food and medicine, these USAID programs promote the livelihoods of millions of people who directly rely on natural resources for their survival, while strengthening rural peace and stability, democracy-building, health, and environmental security. The Biodiversity program thus plays an important role in long-term U.S. foreign policy objectives and enhances U.S. economic and national security interests. We request level funding in FY 2018.

The Global Environment Facility

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an independent international financial institution that provides grants for environmental projects that also support sustainable economic growth, uniting 183 countries with U.S. corporations and NGOs. America's investment in the GEF also yields a very high rate of leverage. For every U.S. dollar invested, multiple additional dollars are raised from donor and recipient countries and other public and private partners. GEF investments include more than 1,000 conservation projects in 155 countries. It is the largest

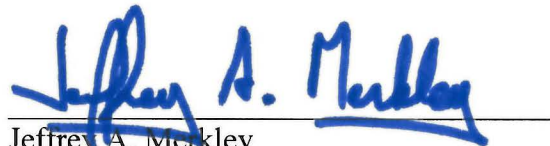
single financier of forest conservation through its support of more than 400 projects, including projects that help to combat illegal logging, a practice that costs the American economy upwards of \$1 billion per year in lost revenue. The GEF has established and structured a new program to combat poaching and wildlife trafficking around the world. We request level funding in FY18.

U.S. government investments in international conservation protect against wildlife poaching and trafficking while serving as a stabilizing force in fragile regions. We urge you to continue level funding for combating wildlife trafficking and international conservation programs in the FY 2018 SFOPS Appropriations Act. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



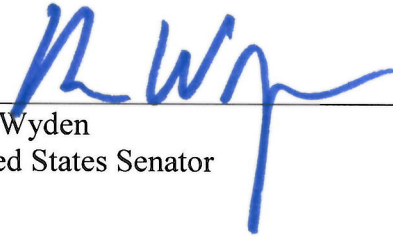
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



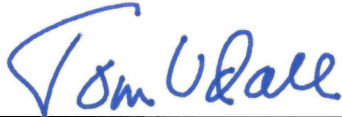
Al Franken
United States Senator



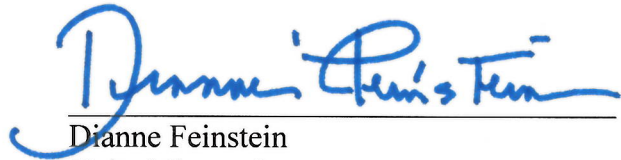
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



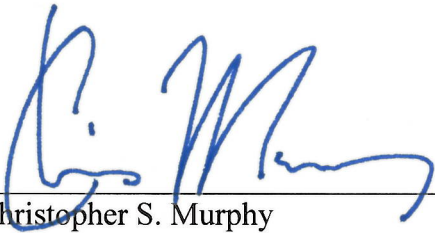
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



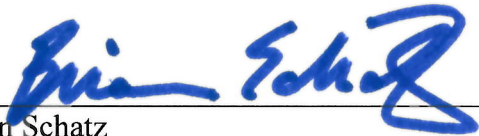
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



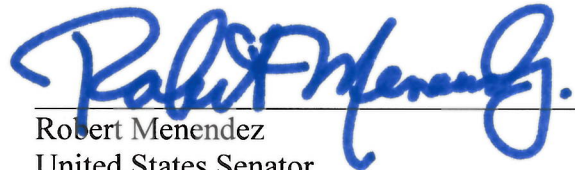
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



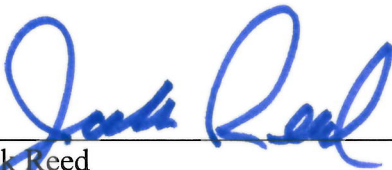
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



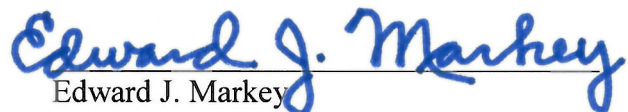
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator