

**Arria formula meeting of the UN Security Council**  
**on the impact of illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons to poaching in Africa**  
**co-hosted by the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Angola**

30 November 2015, 10:00AM – 12:30PM, Conference Room 7

Speakers:

- **Mr. Emmanuel de Merode**, Chief Warden, Virunga National Park, DRC (via VTC) (TBC);
- **Mr. Khristopher Carlson**, Senior Researcher, Small Arms Survey, Co-author of “In the Line of Fire Elephant and Rhino Poaching in Africa”;
- **Mr. Jorge Rios**, Coordinator of the Global Wildlife and Forest Crime Programme, UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

Format:

- the Arria meeting will be open to all UN Member States and civil society, with all Member States invited to speak subject to time constraints.

Description:

The decline of wildlife populations in Africa has escalated over the last years, with poaching being the key reason of this trend. The massive scale of this illegal activity is degrading habitats, corrupting local officials, undermining the rule of law, and causing the loss of tax and tourist revenue.

Despite remarkable efforts by African states to combat poaching, profits resulting from the high demand continue to attract a wide array of actors, including armed groups, terrorist groups, commercial poachers, criminal networks and rogue military personnel, contributing to a thriving international illicit trade.

Even when situated in protected areas, wildlife populations remain vulnerable as Park Rangers often need more equipment and training to face adversaries with their advanced weaponry, and have also become victims of armed attacks by those groups.

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) – ranging from sophisticated hunting rifles to military-style weapons – are the principal tools used by poachers to kill wildlife and to target protection officers. These firearms are often illicitly trafficked or introduced as temporary imports and subsequently diverted to the black market. They are often not registered and difficult to trace.

No less important is ammunition, which is often provided by criminal organizations and escapes most arms control regimes or domestic legislation. Rangers and law enforcement often lack the capacity to adequately investigate and trace the ammunition shells found on the ground.

Weak or non-existent legislative frameworks regulating the manufacturing and transfers of arms and ammunition as well as norms prohibiting the illicit poaching, impede effective detection, investigation and prosecution of those apprehended on poaching or trafficking charges. Even when charges are brought, improper handling of evidence and/or witnesses is frequently an obstacle to successful convictions.

Several UN Security Council’s thematic and country-specific resolutions refer the illegal exploitation of natural resources, including wildlife poaching. For example, resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015) recognise the link between the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources and the proliferation and trafficking of arms as a major factor fuelling and exacerbating many conflicts. In his report on Central Africa (S/2013/297) the Secretary-General concluded that poaching and its potential linkages to other criminal, even terrorist, activities are a grave menace to sustainable peace and security.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) concluded that both poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking were among the most lucrative criminal activities. The UN Crime Commission and INTERPOL confirmed that operations were increasingly conducted on a large scale by transnational organized criminal groups, often in cooperation with armed extremist groups.

In July 2015, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution 69/314 on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife and inter alia requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly in 2016 on the global status of illicit trafficking in wildlife, including poaching and illegal trade.

#### Purpose of the Meeting

The meeting will aim at discussing the linkages between the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and poaching. It will also present an opportunity for Member States, in particular those directly affected by illicit poaching, to outline the reasons why poaching fuelled by illicit trade in arms should be considered a threat to international and regional peace and stability.

In their interventions, Member States may wish to discuss the ways that the international community could improve application of the following tools aimed at combating illicit poaching, such as:

- building capacities of local authorities to detect and combat armed groups and criminal networks engaging in illicit poaching as well as improving national response in investigating and prosecuting the crimes of illicit poaching and related criminal offences such as illicit firearms and ammunition trafficking and manufacturing;
- implementing security sector reform programmes aimed at averting possible illegal activities by members of armed forces and police;
- facilitating strengthening of the legislative frameworks that prohibit poaching, establish effective arms and ammunition manufacturing, import and export systems as well as regulate hunting activities;
- reflecting how the Arms Trade Treaty could contribute to preventing weapons from falling into the hands of armed groups and criminal organizations engaging in poaching and wildlife trafficking activities;
- encouraging criminalizing the illicit poaching as a serious crime, as well as related offences, such as illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and ammunition, in a manner consistent with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol on Firearms;
- improving stockpile security and management, ensuring proper marking at time of manufacture and of import, preventing diversion of firearms and ammunition to illicit markets;
- strengthening national and regional capacities of rangers and criminal justice practitioners to identify weapons and ammunition used by poachers and tracing them back to their origin;
- encouraging and facilitating regional cooperation in this regard.