

# Organized crime and the environment

The human population is expected to rise from **8 billion to 9.5 billion in 2050**, and **87%** of this growth is expected to occur in Africa.

Increased populations raise the demand for fish, timber, sand and other commodities, but supply will decrease as ecosystems are exploited through overfishing and deforestation.

Environmental commodities are **not evenly spread** - Africa, Asia and Latin America suffer the effects of environmental crime the most.



## ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

- Facilitates the spread of zoonotic diseases, such as avian influenza or COVID-19. The UN estimates that 75% of all emerging diseases are zoonotic.
- Endangers wildlife. Today, a million species are at threat of extinction.
- Accelerates regional biodiversity collapse.

## PLASTIC WASTE TRADE

Plastic waste from western countries is shipped to South East Asia and Africa, where it is illegally dumped or burned, harming the environment, waterways and atmosphere. Workers at informal waste-management facilities are often exploited or become victims of forced labour.

## ILLEGAL LOGGING

Believed to account for 15–30% of all timber traded globally, illegal logging contributes to deforestation, violence and conflict.

## ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED AND UNREGULATED FISHING

- Estimated to account for 20% of global fishing or between 11–26 million tonnes of fish worldwide.
- Contributes to forced labour and human trafficking. Men from South and South East Asia are often exploited on vessels engaged in illegal fishing.
- Increases food security risks through overfishing and has a direct impact on climate change.

## ILLEGAL SAND MINING

Sand mining lowers the water table, increasing the salinity of ground water, which harms farming practices. This drives national migration flows, as labourers seek employment in urban areas, and contributes to rising crime levels. As the human population grows, demand for building sand increases.



Environmental crime **undermines progress towards 80% of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals**. It obstructs initiatives to protect our oceans and land, and affects targets related to human development such as eradicating poverty and hunger.

Communities around the world are mobilizing to protect their lands. From Colombia to Cambodia, they organize forest patrols, advocate against illegal mining or provide alternative employment opportunities to keep community members from engaging in crime.

**The involvement of affected communities is key for any policy against organized environmental crime.**

