

Environmental Crime Costs the World a Record \$258 Billion



New York, June 6 (RHC)-- Environmental crime is the world's 4th largest criminal enterprise, after drug smuggling, counterfeiting and human trafficking, according to a new report.

Criminal gangs are plundering the Earth's natural resources faster than previously thought, with the value of environmental crimes estimated to be as high as \$258 USD billion annually, United Nations and police officials said over the weekend.

The value of stolen natural resources -- including fish, timber, gold and other minerals -- has risen by 26 percent in the last year, according to a report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and Interpol, the largest international police organization.

Weak laws and poorly funded security forces are enabling international criminal networks and armed rebels to profit from a trade that also damages ecosystems and threatens species with extinction, the report said.

Today, environmental crimes are worth between \$91 billion and \$258 billion USD, up from between \$70 billion and \$213 billion in 2014, UNEP and Interpol said. The illegal small arms trade, in contrast, is worth around \$3 billion annually.

The report notes that in the last decade, environmental crime - including the illegal sale of minerals, trafficking in hazardous waste, carbon credit fraud and illegal fishing - has grown by at least 5 to 7 percent per year, more than twice as fast as the broader global economy.

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