



# REO HIGHLIGHTS

**U. S.  
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October 2015

## U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change



On September 25th, during President Xi's State Visit to Washington, D.C. the United States and China marked another major milestone in their joint leadership in the fight against climate change with the release of a U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change. The Statement describes a common vision for a new global climate

agreement to be concluded in Paris this December. The Statement also includes significant domestic policy announcements and commitments to global climate finance, demonstrating the determination of both countries to act decisively to achieve the goals set last year. The two presidents also announced their decision to cooperate in "joint training, technical exchanges, information sharing, and public education on combating wildlife trafficking, and enhance international law enforcement cooperation in this field." This set of agreements on key issues in the Paris climate negotiations reflects the commitment of the U.S. and China to work together and with all other countries to reach an historic climate agreement in Paris. [The White House Press Release](#)

## U.S.-China Deal to Ban Ivory Trade

Recognizing the importance and urgency of combating wildlife trafficking, on September 25, 2015, the United States and China committed to enact nearly complete bans on ivory imports and exports, including significant and timely restrictions on the import of ivory as hunting trophies, and to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade of ivory. The two sides are extending cooperation in joint training, technical exchanges, information sharing, and public education on combating wildlife trafficking, and enhance international law enforcement cooperation in this field. It's an industry that has been driven largely by China's booming middle class, in which some people covet ivory as a status symbol. Wildlife conservation groups say that Asia, and China in particular, are the key cogs in an industry that they say has helped to encourage the slaughter of some 30,000 African elephants a year. [More](#)

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**Meet our new Regional ESTH Assistant and the Newsletter Editor:**



Ripon Zaman has been worked for the US Government for nine years. Prior to government service, he worked in the textile and garment industry for eight years.

Before joining the US Embassy Thailand's Regional Environment, Science, Technology and Health (ESTH) team, Ripon worked in the US Embassy Nicaragua's Management Section for more than five years first as the Financial Manager and later as the Human Resources Officer. He has also worked for USAID's Financial Management Offices in Mozambique and Bolivia. Ripon earned his M.B.A. from Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. As an eco-friendly enthusiastic and an environmental advocate, Ripon is very excited to join the Regional ESTH Thailand team.

Outside of work, Ripon enjoys traveling and reading about current affairs, political history and cross-cultural topics. He also spends his free time creating food recipes, blending teas, coffee and cigars. Ripon is an amateur food, restaurant, cigar and single malt critic.

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**ASEAN countries recognize wildlife and timber trafficking as serious transnational crime requiring regional action**



Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), 2 October 2015 - In a decision that will help protect biodiversity in the region, ASEAN Member States at the 10th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) this week reached consensus to officially add the "trafficking of wildlife and timber" to the list of regional priority transnational crime threats. Wildlife and forest crime will now be considered as important as other crimes needing collective regional action including drug and precursor trafficking, human trafficking and smuggling, terrorism, and arms smuggling. ASEAN Member States are now calling for a stronger response by law enforcement and criminal justice institutions. The proposal to include wildlife and timber trafficking

on the ASEAN Senior Officials on Transnational Crime agenda was initially led by the Royal Thai Police with the support of UNODC through a joint conference in April 2015 and subsequently placed on the AMMTC agenda for ministerial consideration. [More](#) [UNODC]

**Thailand Destroys Two Tons of Seized Ivory**



On August 26, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-ocha, joined by Minister of Natural Resources and Environment General Surasak Kanchanarat and other ministers and officials, presided over a ceremony to destroy 2.2 metric tons of seized ivory, the first time Thailand has destroyed confiscated ivory. The ceremony included religious rites for the lives of the elephants lost to poaching and an official handover by the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation (DNP) of a number of raw ivory pieces to museums for education and scientific research. The remainder of the ivory—which DNP officials said constituted all of the ivory in the government's possession for which investigations have been closed—was destroyed first by being crushed into small pieces in a hammer mill and then by being commingled with industrial waste and incinerated at an industrial waste management facility. Representatives for WWF and the Freeland Foundation audited the destruction. The A/DCM Kristina Kvien, Embassy's Regional ESTH team and USAID representative joined the ceremony along with other members of the international community.

## 2015 Events

October 4 -  
**World Animal Day**

October 5 -  
**World Habitat Day**

November 21 -  
**World Fisheries Day**

December -  
**UN Framework on  
Climate Change  
Convention, Paris**

December 1  
**World AIDS Day**

**Eat A Red Apple Day**

December 5 -  
**International Volun-  
teer Day**

December 10 -  
**International Human  
Rights Day**

December 11 -  
**International Mountain  
Day**

## Pangolin Range States Meeting

The United States and Vietnam co-hosted the first ever Pangolin Range States Meeting from June 24 – June 26 in Danang City, Vietnam. Pangolins are small to medium-sized anteaters with keratin scales that live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. There are eight species of pangolin, four in Africa and four in Asia, and all species are currently listed on CITES

Appendix II which regulates international trade. Furthermore, the Asian pangolin species have a zero export quota for international trade. Despite these measures, pangolins are thought to be the most trafficked mammal in the world, and the illegal trade of pangolin specimens is escalating at an alarming rate, according to CITES Secretariat Enforcement Support Officer Pia Jonsson. (Additional information about pangolins is available at <http://www.fws.gov/international/animals/pangolins.html>) Delegates from over 29 African and Asian pangolin range countries attended the three day workshop where they discussed challenges to global pangolin conservation and developed recommendations to address the illegal pangolin trade. The delegates discussed conservation and enforcement issues, identified transnational trafficking trends, and developed recommendations to address shared challenges. The conference was funded by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant and implemented through non-governmental organization (NGO) Humane Society International. [USFWS]



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## Forest fires in Indonesia choke much of south-east Asia

The illegal burning of forests and agricultural land across Indonesia has blanketed much of south-east Asia in an acrid haze, leading to one of the most severe regional shutdowns in years. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said Indonesia needs to convict plantation companies for the noxious smoke, created by the annual destruction of plants during the dry season. Burning the land is a quick way to ready the soil for new seed. In Singapore, races for the swimming world cup – the FINA World Championship – were cancelled. A marathon in Malaysia was also abandoned and all schools were closed for days. Tens of thousands of people in Indonesia and Malaysia have sought medical treatment for respiratory problems. Scientists say the pollution could surpass 1997 levels when the haze created an environmental disaster that cost an estimated US\$9 billion in damage. [More..](#)



## USG GRANTEE ACTIVITIES

### Utilizing Indonesia's love of social media to reduce slow Lorises illegal trade: Yayasan IAR Indonesia (YIARI).



The slow loris in Indonesia is in serious danger of extinction and the greatest threat to its survival is the illegal trade in wildlife. Its huge brown eyes and soft fur make this small nocturnal primate highly prized as a pet and the victim of an online craze created by videos on YouTube. Thousands of slow lorises are poached from the wild and illegally sold on the street or in animal markets. The slow lorises' teeth are clipped off by the traders to make them easy to handle, resulting in the death of many of them from blood loss or infection before they are sold.

In 2006, a specialist rescue and rehabilitation center was established in Bogor, Java by Yayasan IAR Indonesia (YIARI) to accommodate displaced Indonesian slow lorises and provide the option of release back to the wild for some individuals. Since 2011, YIARI focused its attention on understanding and mitigating the illegal trade in slow lorises. In 2014, based on results from YIARI investigations and surveys, an awareness campaign was carried out, which was designed to target certain profile groups within the Indonesian public, specifically potential buyers of slow lorises. The campaign achieved reasonable success: numbers of slow lorises on display in the major Indonesian bird markets reduced significantly. Unfortunately, since the campaign ceased at the end of 2014, trade in slow lorises has been rising again and highlights the need for continued media pressure. YIARI utilizes Indonesia's love of social media as a platform to reduce the demand in slow lorises by spreading awareness and providing education to the public and specific target groups. The campaign uses different social media, and utilize real life events and celebrities, to help raise the profile of slow lorises in Indonesia.

During a site visit last month, REO Bangkok visited YIARI's rehabilitation center in Bogor (photos below), the only rescue and rehabilitation center in Indonesia. and witnessed the good work the organization is doing to achieve the goal. YIARI is working closely with universities and scientists, the organization also carrying out research into successful rehabilitation and reintroduction programs for slow lorises. A number of lorises with their teeth intact have been released wearing radio collars and are being closely monitored by the team. YIARI also work closely with local authorities and the police to catch wildlife traffickers and dealers and bring them to court. Education of local communities and better law enforcement are vital if this endangered primate is to stand a chance of survival. We were very impressed with YIARI's efficient operation and believe the organization motto "Return as many slow lorises to the wild as possible" is working. YIARI's success story is an example that it is possible to change public perceptions and behavior with simple but effective electronic media campaigns.



## USG GRANTEE ACTIVITIES continued

### Increase the capacity of the traditional farmers through community agroforestry: Santalum, Timor-Leste

Another exciting USG funded grant implemented by Santalum just completed their one year project to increase capacity by public awareness through technical training and implemented environmental friendly activities to maintain the sustainability of Forest, Land and Water, and the Environment in Uma Kaduk village, Timor-Leste. Given the new East Timorese independence reach at the age of 12 years faces various problems, one is the human resources in this case farmers. Given the Timorese people generally live in the highlands that have a habit of traditional farming by utilizing forest land as a farm to farm with a period of 3 years after it penetrated the forest land to the next, this habit is done for generations. As part of the process, the non-government organization Santalum introduced activities with the local farmers through informal educational method about how to utilize natural resources to increase the production of agricultural goods with Agroforestry systems in a sustainable manner. As a newly independent country, Timor-Leste needs some basic but long term environmental friendly agroforestry and ecologically viable method. This is where USG grants came in to encourage and finance the small grant.

Almost all members of the farmer groups under this project received basic environmental friendly cultivation training. After the training they enthusiastically planted crops because they understood that it can bring substantial benefits to them. Planting activities implemented in December 2014 until January 2015. The total land planted to 6 hectares spread over 12 garden group members with various types of plants such as maize, sweet Orange, mango, rambuthan, durian, mahogany plant etc. Interestingly the project also grouped some women separately through horticultural activities, as horticulture is complementary agroforestry activities that was implemented during the dry season. This activity also increased the capacity in terms of women's empowerment.



## USG GRANTEE ACTIVITIES continued

### Consulate Chiang Mai Announces Anti-Pollution Award to Kick Off Environment Month in October:

Chiang Mai Consulate Announced Anti-Pollution Award to Kick Off Environment Month in October CG Heath announced a grant from the Office of Global Women's Issues and the State Department's Full Participation Fund of \$69,974 (2,519,100THB) to Warm Heart Worldwide's anti-pollution program in northern Thailand. Following the award announcement, the Consulate hosted 50 local officials to hear a lecture by Dr. Michael Shafer, President of Warm Heart, on efforts to reduce the health effects of agricultural waste burning on rural women and children.

#### About the project:

Exposure to environmental air pollution from agricultural burning of rice and corn residues is a leading cause of respiratory disease in Northern Thailand. As many women in Northern Thailand suffer from poor nutrition, inadequate access to health care, and primarily lung disease from indoor air pollution. They are more susceptible to the health hazards of environmental air pollution and are at a greater risk of developing chronic diseases. The objectives of this project are to reduce seasonal air borne particulate pollution in Northern Thailand to reduce health risk to women and infants, and to consequently increase farmer use of biochar-based organic fertilizer, decrease use of synthetic fertilizers, and increase farmer net incomes. Warm Hear will conduct biochar training programs and demonstrations by a trained agronomist and farmers from ECHO and Warm Heart Worldwide in three different rural villages in Northern Thailand. As part of trainings, the organization will also provide farmers with instructions on how to teach other villagers to make biochar because the population is largely illiterate, materials will be illustrated with "manuals" and simple posters.



## U.S. Embassy, Bangkok Green Team activities

### U.S. Embassy, Bangkok joined coastal cleanup in Rayong Province, Thailand

On Saturday, September 19, 2015 28 volunteers from U.S. Embassy Bangkok joined a group of 500 others to help clean up the 3.5 Kilometer-long Namrin and Rayoon Beaches in Rayong Province, Thailand. This special event was part of a worldwide environmental campaign known as “The 13th Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup Day.” Major participants and sponsors of the Coastal Cleanup Day included Dow Chemical Thailand Limited, SCG-Dow Group, Rayong Province Municipal Office and Industrial Estate Authori-



ty of Thailand (IEAT) which teamed up to promote environmental awareness and responsibility. Volunteers learned how to separate different types of garbage, and to place the trash into color-coded bags to be weighed and properly disposed of.

Through this activity, the petrochemical companies, local authorities, and villagers worked together to raise environmental awareness among Thai youth, the general public, and industrial groups by emphasizing the importance of maintaining clean ecological systems in coastal areas. Several hundred bags of garbage were collected, making a huge impact the beach and the adjacent grassland and waterways. By the time the cleanup ended, all of the volunteers all felt a sense of accomplishment for a job well done.

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### OES acting Assistant Secretary visits Vietnam



Marking the environment theme month of the 20th anniversary of normalized diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam, acting Assistant Secretary for the State Department’s Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) Judy Garber visited Vietnam September 9-11, where she discussed environmental conservation, wildlife trafficking, climate change, science and technology cooperation, health diplomacy, and space collaboration. On September 10, Ambassador Garber met with Minister of Science and Technology (MOST) Nguyen Quan, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Ha Cong Tuan, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment (MONRE) Nguyen Thai Lai, and embassy officials. She also hosted a youth panel to discuss wildlife trafficking as part of the Mission’s public diplomacy campaign Operation Game Change (OGC). The following day, Ambassador Garber joined Ambassador Osius at Nam Dinh province today to launch a new USAID youth climate change program, the Red River Delta Adaptation and Youth (READY); discuss the region’s climate change challenges and solutions with local farmers benefiting from USAID’s Vietnam Forest and Delta’s climate change program; visit a national park designated a Ramsar site for its protected mangrove reserves; and meet with provincial officials.

## NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST

### Malaysian PM urges Indonesia to act on smoke-belching fires (AFP)

South Malaysia's premier has urged Indonesia to act against those to blame for raging fires that have blanketed Southeast Asia in smog for weeks, as Malaysian schools closed again Monday over health concerns. [OES-NEWS-CLIP, October 5, 2015]  
<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/malaysian-pm-urges-indonesia-act-smoke-belching-fires-054247688.html#8CsTnU6>

### Law enforcement officials discuss challenges in combating wildlife trafficking in HCMC

On September 17, USAID and Vietnam Customs General Department co-organized "Strengthening the Effectiveness of Combatting Illicit Wildlife Trade in Vietnam" workshop in Ho Chi Minh City. Representatives from Vietnamese law enforcement agencies of Customs, Forest Protection, Environmental Police, Border Defense, Coast Guard and state management agency of CITES discussed challenges and recommendations to improve the government's efficiency in combatting wildlife trafficking. All speakers agreed that wildlife trafficking crimes are rising in sophistication, while penalties are not strict enough to discourage traffickers. Inconsistent legal regulations, different interpretation of the regulations, and the lack of implementation guidelines were also pointed as challenges. The inability in valuing trafficked wildlife as a benchmark for determining criminal prosecution and respective penalties has impeded court hearings. [ESTH Vietnam Notes of the Week - September 18, 2015]

### USAID Helps Organize Forum to Recognize Leaders Promoting Sustainability in the Coral Triangle

Six entrepreneurs from Coral Triangle countries were recognized this week for integrating sustainable marine tourism practices to support the conservation of coastal areas, marine habitats and marine wildlife. Their businesses in Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Island and Timor-Leste took the spotlight at the 4th Coral Triangle on Coral Reefs, Fisheries, and Food Security Regional Business Forum held in Indonesia. They were judged based on their ability to not only engage in conservation efforts, but to empower communities on planning and decision-making to help minimize negative impacts to the natural environment, among other criteria. The event was hosted by the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. Read more about the event [here](#). [USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, September 9, 2015]

### China Passes Law to Control Air Pollution

China's top legislature on August 29 adopted an amendment to the Air Pollution Control Law that will restrict various sources of smog and make information on environmental cleanliness more readily available to the public. The law stipulates that a gasoline quality standard should be established and matched with the country's restriction requirements for major pollutants. The amended law also provides that China should promote clean and efficient use of coal, obliging local governments to ban low-quality coal for residential use. The law also provides greater environmental transparency to the public. It stipulates authorities of the State Council should evaluate provincial-level governments on their attainment of air quality improvement targets. [[Xinhua](#), August 31, 2015]

### Asia-Pacific Governments and Law Enforcement Agencies Ramp Up Efforts to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

(Representatives from governments, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations recently gathered in the Philippines for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Pathfinder Dialogue II on Fighting Corruption and Illicit trade. Recent high profile events such as the death of a well-known African lion and the Thai government destroying an ivory stockpile were among the cases examined at the forum that help increase awareness of wildlife trafficking. Specific emphasis was placed on the weak links along supply chains that acts as conduits for the illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products. Freeland, the implementing partner of the USAID-ARREST attended the event to present ongoing efforts to reduce demand for wildlife products, strengthen law enforcement and regional information sharing networks such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Wildlife Enforcement Network. USAID/RDMA Weekly Environment Update, September 5, 2015).



## NEWS ITEMS OF INTEREST continued

### Thai Celebrities Speak Out Against Wildlife Trafficking in iTHINK Campaign

Four new Thai champions against wildlife trafficking added their voices to a public campaign to help reduce the demand for wildlife products and put a halt to the illegal trade. Celebrities joining the iTHINK campaign, supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funded Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking program, include singer/actor Kong-Saharat Sangkapreecha, and actress Noona-Nuengthida Sophon. Also appointed is renowned wildlife veterinarian at the Department of National Parks Dr. Patarapol (Lotter) Maneern, and highly respected marine biologist, Dr. Thon Thamrongnawasawat. Nearly 200 supporters from government organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector joined the event, which was organized by Free-land. The regional iTHINK platform and ARREST engages the public in Thailand and the region to promote wildlife conservation and speak out against wildlife trafficking and consumption. [USAID Regional Development Mission Asia, October 2, 2015]

### Indonesia: Can Anything Save the Sumatran Rhino From Extinction?

[When Rasmus Gren Havmøller—a Danish Ph.D. student focused on conservation, ecology, and genetics at the University of Copenhagen—read about this little rhino in a World Wildlife Fund article, he was intrigued. So he began digging for more information about the species. What he learned was grim: The Sumatran rhino, one of three Asian species, had declined to the point of near extinction. Sumatrans are believed to be the oldest surviving rhino species. They're the smallest living rhinos and the only Asian rhinos with two horns. They once roamed throughout Southeast Asia and are the closest surviving relative of woolly rhinos, which died off about 10,000 years ago. Havmøller and a team of researchers began a comprehensive analysis on the status of Sumatran rhinos. His study, published last month, revealed that the species is now extinct in the wild in Malaysia. The paper also noted that fewer than one-hundred are hanging on in the rain forests of the Indonesian island of Sumatra and in the state of Kalimantan, in Indonesian Borneo. Nine Sumatran rhinos live in captivity. Speaking from Copenhagen shortly after World Rhino Day and an outcry by conservationists over the fate of the Sumatran rhino, Havmøller explains his work in Malaysia; the threats facing these animals; their cute quirks; and what he thinks can save them from extinction. [Source: National Geographic, Sep 30, 2015]

### Vietnam to host ASEAN environment ministers' meeting in October

The 13th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment (AMME 13) is scheduled to take place in Hanoi from October 26 to 30, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE). The AMME 13 will host environment ministers from ASEAN member countries with representatives of international organizations to review regional cooperation in climate change prevention, water resource protection and biodiversity and marine environment preservation.

### Indonesia seizes shark fins destined for Hong Kong

Indonesian authorities have seized about 3,000 shark fins that were about to be flown to Hong Kong, an official said Wednesday, October 7th a rare success in the battle against the illegal trade. Indonesian government officials told AFP "The fins came from around 3,000 oceanic whitetip sharks which were caught in the waters around Java island," said the official who works for an agency that deals with fish, referring to Indonesia's main island. The haul was worth one billion rupiah (\$72,000) in Indonesia but would fetch several times that amount in Hong Kong, where shark fins are considered a delicacy. [More...](#) [AFP, Oct 8, 2015]

### Vietnam focuses on coastal eco-system, mangrove forest protection

The safeguard of coastal eco-system and mangrove forest in the Mekong Delta region was given a push as phase two of the Integrated Coastal Management Program (ICMP) kicked off in An Giang province on August 28. The ICMP will be carried out during 2015-2018 to efficiently manage and protect coastal ecosystems in the Mekong Delta region to mitigate and adapt to environmental hazards related to climate change. [ESTH Vietnam Notes of the Week, September 4, 2015]

