



## PRESS RELEASE

LONDON, UK  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2010 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Global police swoop traps tiger traders**

Campaigners at the London-based Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) welcome the news that INTERPOL, the world's largest international police organisation, has joined the fight to end the tiger trade.

An international law enforcement operation coordinated by INTERPOL against the illegal trade in tigers has led to the arrest of 25 individuals suspected of taking part in the illicit trade of one of the world's most endangered species.

The two-month operation (August-September 2010) involved national enforcement agencies in six tiger-range countries (China, India, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam) and was coordinated by INTERPOL's Environmental Crime Programme at its General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France. It worked in close collaboration with its participating member countries to provide a single platform to National Central Bureaus for the exchange and co-ordination of intelligence via INTERPOL's I-24/7 secure police communications system.

Direct enforcement action during the operation included the arrest by Indian authorities of ten suspected wildlife criminals, while in Thailand the Royal Thai Police arrested a number of alleged tiger smugglers connected to cross-border trade, including at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok. In a single raid in Hanoi, Vietnamese police seized six whole tiger skeletons and six tiger skulls, while in a separate case two tiger carcasses were seized along with 50kg of tiger bone. In Russia, criminal intelligence obtained by national authorities revealed key smuggling routes.

"The national agencies involved in this international operation supported by INTERPOL have shown unscrupulous criminals who target threatened species that action will be taken to combat their illegal activities," said INTERPOL Environmental Crime Programme Manager David Higgins.

With as few as 3,200 wild tigers remaining, time is running out to stop the dealers who profit from the international illegal trade in tiger skin and bone. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will be hosting world leaders at a summit in St Petersburg, Russia, in November, to decide on future global actions to save the last tigers.

"It's great to see news of arrests of criminals rather than seizures alone. Organised crime needs an organised response and Operation Tigre is a step in the right direction, but must be sustained" said Debbie Banks, Head of EIA's Tiger Campaign.

"Increased resources for slick, professional policing operations to bust the criminal networks controlling the tiger trade should be at the top of the agenda for the St Petersburg tiger forum."

## EDITORS' NOTES

1. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is a UK-based Non Governmental Organisation that investigates and campaigns against a wide range of environmental crimes, including illegal wildlife trade, illegal logging, hazardous waste, and trade in climate and ozone-altering chemicals.

2. INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization, with [188 member countries](#). Created in 1923, it facilitates cross-border police co-operation, and supports and assists all organizations, authorities and services whose mission is to prevent or combat international crime.

3. Current estimates suggest there may be as few as 3,200 tigers left worldwide. Three sub-species of tiger have become extinct in the past 100 years.

4. EIA is working to support the international community's objective of doubling the wild tiger population by the next Year of the Tiger, 2022. Read more about EIA's tiger trade investigations here <http://bit.ly/cOVGG4>

5. The International Tiger Forum will be hosted by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in St Petersburg, Russia, November 21-24.

For further information about Operation Tigre, please contact David Higgins, Manager, Environmental Crime Programme at:

I.P.C.O. – INTERPOL, General Secretariat  
200, Quai Charles de Gaulle  
69006 Lyon – France  
Tel: +33 (0) 472 44 76 23  
Fax: +33 (0) 472 44 71 63  
[d.higgins@interpol.int](mailto:d.higgins@interpol.int)

For further information about EIA, please contact Debbie Banks, EIA Head of Tiger Campaign, at [debbiebanks@eia-international.org](mailto:debbiebanks@eia-international.org) or telephone 020 7354 7960.

Environmental Investigation Agency  
62-63 Upper Street  
London N1 0NY  
UK  
[www.eia-international.org](http://www.eia-international.org)  
Tel: +44 207 354 7960  
Fax: +44 207 354 7961

ends