

'India Playing a Leadership Role in Wildlife Management by Involving Local Communities': Dr. Harsh Vardhan

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India Hosts Global Wildlife Programme to Address Illegal Wildlife Trade

In an attempt to address illegal wildlife trade across 19 countries of Asia and Africa, India is hosting the Global Wildlife Programme (GWP) jointly with World Bank and United Nations Development Programme. Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan will inaugurate the Global Wildlife Programme on October 2. Briefing mediapersons on the Global Wildlife Programme here today, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that India is playing a leadership role in management of wildlife through involvement of local communities. Pointing out that no programme can succeed solely because of Government policies, the Minister said that peoples' participation at societal level can ensure its success. "Five crore people living around national parks and sanctuaries are working as partners in environment conservation", Dr. Harsh Vardhan said. The Minister pointed out that a 15-year National Wildlife Action Plan (2017-31), with a special focus on peoples' participation will also be launched on October 2. He emphasised that the Conference will act as a platform for knowledge exchange and coordination on the action taken on the ground to combat illegal poaching of wildlife and improve governance on wildlife conservation. Dr. Harsh Vardhan underlined the fact that the number of rhinos, tigers and elephants is in fact, increasing.

The Minister said that till now programmes and plans related to wildlife were focused on and around national parks and sanctuaries. However, the strategy and programmes will now be based on the landscape of the region. He added that the impact of such issues as global warming, climate change and disaster management on the people living around wildlife areas and on the wildlife will also be discussed.

Coinciding with the 'Wildlife Week', the theme of the Conference is - "Peoples' participation in wildlife conservation". The meeting will bring about strengthened cooperation between India and the 18 GWP countries in better management of wildlife habitats and minimizing human-wildlife conflict situations. It will also enable India to strengthen its enforcement mechanism to control illicit trade.

The GWP will hold discussions on management of wildlife habitat, securing sustainable community livelihood, enhancing enforcement, monitoring, cooperation to reduce wildlife crimes such as poaching and related threats. The Conference will provide an opportunity for India to showcase its conservation efforts through joint forest management, vana sanrakshan samitis, eco-development committees in and around Protected Areas.

The proposed outcomes of New Delhi Conference include: Reiterating Mahatma Gandhi principles to the world, as the Conference coincides with Gandhi Jayanti and UN International Day of Non- Violence on October 2, 2017; Take leadership in Wildlife Conservation by showcasing India's conservation models for Asiatic lion, single horn

rhino, tiger and Asiatic elephants; Consolidating “people’s participation for wildlife conservation”; Need to strongly address unaccounted black money generated through illegal wildlife trade at global market; Sensitise stakeholders like Governments, corporate, banks, public sectors, media, youth etc for investments in wildlife conservation and develop sustainable models for wildlife conservation thorough peoples’ participation in 19 GWP countries.

The meeting will host wildlife experts, leading practitioners across 19 GWP countries, government representatives from India’s forestry and conservation sectors, leading corporate associated with environmental and biodiversity conservation, civil society organisations and school children. The participating nations include – Afghanistan, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gabon, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Philippines, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, representatives of World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will also be present. Earlier, four similar Programmes had been convened at Gland (Switzerland), Hanoi (Vietnam), Nairobi (Kenya) and Liberville (Gabon). Led by the World Bank, the Global Wildlife Programme was initiated in 2015.

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