IMPACT REPORT 2024

IN THIS REPORT

Global Highlights 4-5

Wildlife 6-7

Ocean 8-9

Climate 10-11

Forest 12-13

Extractives 14-15

© Environmental Investigation Agency 2024. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Environmental Investigation Agency, Inc. All photos are the property of EIA unless otherwise noted.

Chief Administrative Personnel

Allan Thornton, President

Alexander von Bismarck, Executive Director

Ghaya Hassairi
Chief Operations and Finance Officer, COO/CFO

Board of Directors

Allan Thornton
Environmental Investigation Agency, President (Founder)

John Fitzgerald
Society for Conservation Biology, Former Policy Director
Defenders of Wildlife, Former General Counsel

Brian B. Cox
MFX Solutions, President and CEO

Janine Ferretti
Boston University, Professor of the Practice of Global Development Policy

Kristin Rechberger
Dynamic Planet, CEO

Anita Plummer, Ph.D.
Howard University, Associate Professor

OUR MISSION

Protecting the Environment with Intelligence

EIA's mission is to develop and implement systemic solutions to the biggest global challenges of our time. For more than 35 years, EIA has utilized innovative techniques – including digital analysis of data, investigations, and cutting-edge communications – to create positive, lasting change. We promote Indigenous and local communities' ability to expose environmental crime, protect their land, and increase protections for climate and biodiversity.

Our campaigns to protect forests, wildlife, the ocean, and the climate persevere in the face of increasing global demand and trade, and the hastening loss of natural resources and species. Our independent and nimble approach produces factual and actionable intelligence; we provide strategic solutions that yield lasting and far-reaching impacts.

As a non-profit organization with IRS 501(c)(3) designation, EIA relies on financial support from individual donors and charitable foundations. Donations to EIA are U.S. tax-deductible to the full extent of applicable law.

This report focuses on the activities of EIA US, EIA's Washington, D.C. office, during 2024.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 marked the 35th anniversary of EIA US, established 5 years after EIA UK by the same founders. Over the decades both institutions have worked independently and in collaboration towards the remarkably consistent mission of exposing and deterring the environmental crimes and injustices that threaten life on Earth as we know it.

One of our first campaigns was to protect elephants from poaching for their ivory tusks. Investigators took unusual steps, including hiding our now-President Allan Thornton in a cardboard box to film an illegal ivory-carving operation, to gather evidence that was ultimately key to securing the 1989 ban on international ivory trade. While unorthodox investigative methods have always set us apart from other NGOs, our fieldwork has since expanded to include use of cutting-edge technology and data analysis. Today, only Japan maintains a major legal ivory industry, and our Wildlife team and local partners use a combination of these strategies to keep up the pressure on the Japanese government to finally destroy the largest remaining demand that drives the illegal networks and continued levels of poaching.

Much of our early work was also focused on protecting the other gentle giants, living in the ocean: whales. EIA's very first investigation exposed the brutality of whaling in the Faroe Islands. Since then our focus on whales has shown that harpoons are not the only thing whales have to worry about. Effectively illustrating the devastating effects of global change on the marine environment, from ozone depletion to climate change to overfishing, changed the conversation at the International Whaling Commission to being fundamentally more precautionary. Now the newly formed EIA US Oceans team is leading the way to build an international coalition to stop underwater noise and other forms of pollution.

The Oceans team grew out of the Wildlife team and illustrates another core strength of our organization, which is that our small-yet-mighty team is particularly open to collaborate across campaigns and projects and to find ways together to take on new challenges when EIA's abilities show a path to successfully taking on an important environmental challenge.

Our Extractive Industries campaign officially launched in 2024, and it was similarly built upon the deep experience of mineral-related work from other existing campaigns, including investigations into toxic mercury used in skin lightening products to successfully stopping the largest proposed open-pit mine in North America. Building upon a solid foundation of on-the-ground experience, facts and inclusive partner outreach is the EIA approach to tackling the growing needs coming our way.

The Extractives campaign also draws upon a philosophy that we have refined over time through our Forest campaigns: while EIA is dedicated to protecting the environment from the exploitation of natural resources, it is foundational to our mission that local and Indigenous communities be at the helm of decision making for the lands they protect and how the resources those lands provide are sustainably harvested and used.

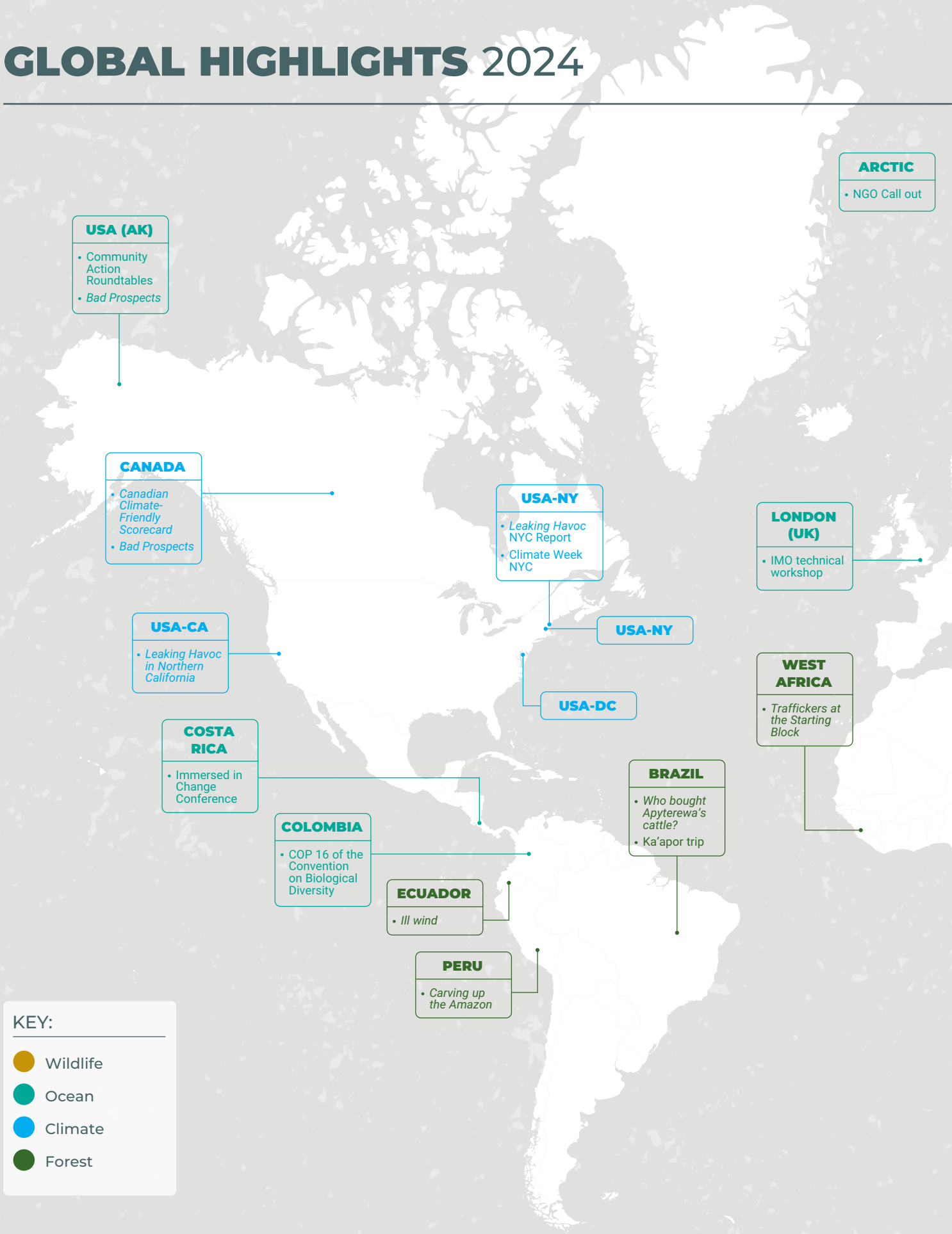
That's why our Forest team partners with environmental defenders and grassroots organizations around the world to make sure they have the resources they need to keep an eye on key ecosystems, like tools that make the timber industry more transparent and traceable. While we follow their lead, we use our international reputation to help amplify their voices on the global stage. We've adopted this approach because it is morally right and the overwhelming evidence that Indigenous and local communities are the best stewards of the world's remaining wild forests. In these increasing partnerships, EIA contributes what we do best: expose the most powerful entities, whether corporations or political leaders, who try to steal local peoples' resources and futures.

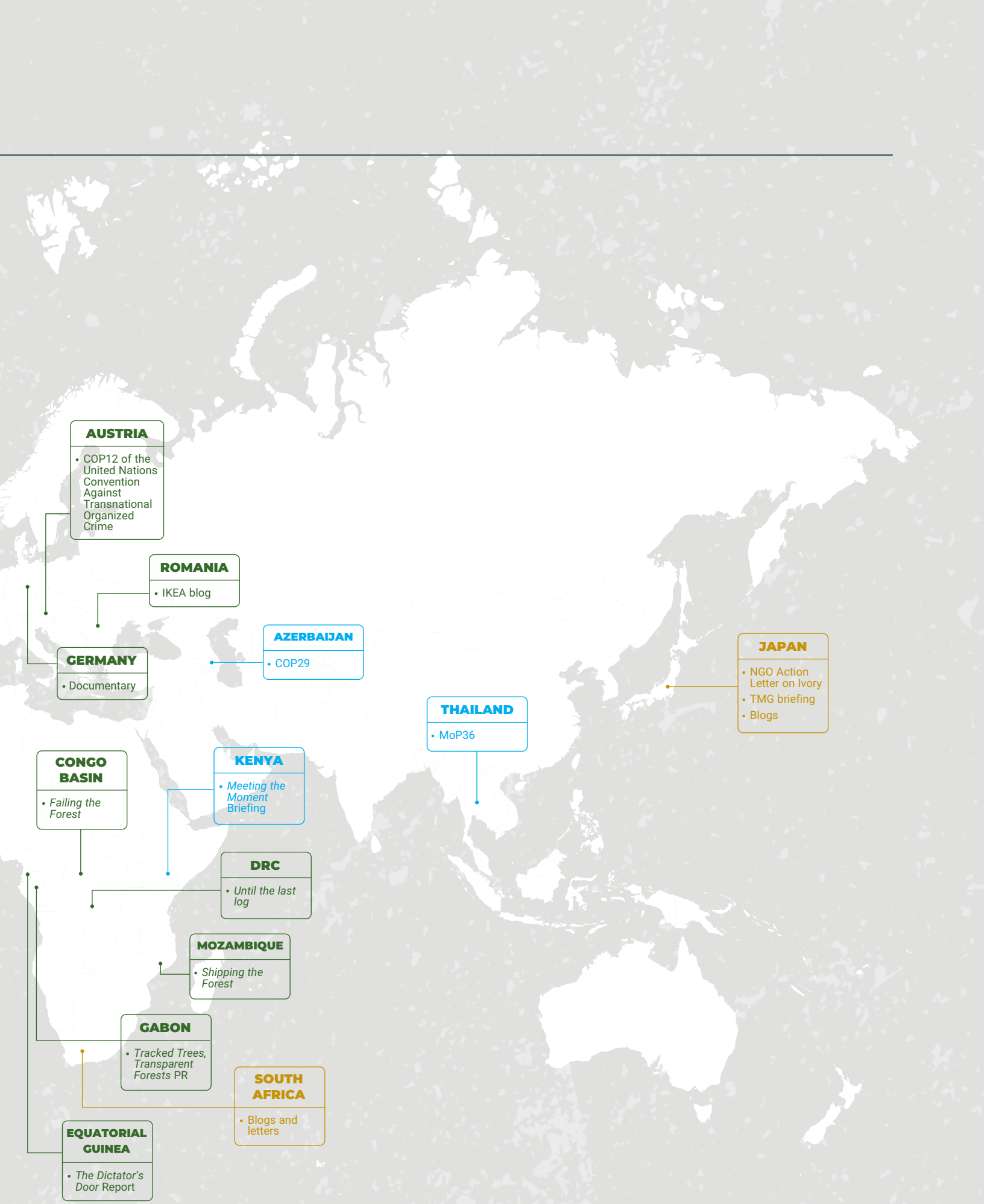
While supporting these grassroots efforts on the local level is key to making progress, don't think we've forgotten about the threat that looms over all others: climate change. Our Climate team's area of focus may seem specific – why focus on F-gases when so much CO_2 is being released? EIA wants to find the fastest ways that it's own approach and expertise can have global impact. Together with EIA UK we have been the only NGO that has stayed focused on these types of climate superpollutants for three decades, leading to the now very tangible opportunity to stop 0.5 degrees of global warming by successfully implementing the global phase-down of these chemicals. It's another lesson learned over the decades: if a small but fearless group of campaigners stays stuck in, and doesn't give up on a good idea that is founded on facts, it can, actually, change the world.

Thank you to our staff and donors, then and now, that have helped shape who we are today. With your support, we're sure we'll be able to keep making a meaningful impact over the next 35 years.

Alexander von Bismarck,
Executive Director

GLOBAL HIGHLIGHTS 2024




AUSTRIA
• COP12 of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime
ROMANIA
• IKEA blog
GERMANY
• Documentary
AZERBAIJAN
• COP29
JAPAN
• NGO Action Letter on Ivory
• TMG briefing
• Blogs
THAILAND
• MoP36
CONGO BASIN
• Failing the Forest
KENYA
• Meeting the Moment Briefing
DRC
• Until the last log
MOZAMBIQUE
• Shipping the Forest
GABON
• Tracked Trees, Transparent Forests PR
SOUTH AFRICA
• Blogs and letters
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
• The Dictator's Door Report

WILDLIFE

EIA envisions a world where the world's most threatened species are protected, recovered, and thriving throughout their natural ranges. EIA's wildlife campaigns deliver lasting protections for some of the world's most iconic species threatened by poaching, illegal trade, and habitat loss. Since its inception, EIA has been dedicated to protecting our world's wildlife, relying on the best available scientific and trade data and intelligence from investigations to support policies and actions that protect threatened and endangered species. EIA's work focuses on stopping the illegal and unsustainable killing of, and trade in, threatened and endangered elephants and rhinos.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. In 2023, South Africa saw a devastating surge in rhino poaching, with the KwaZulu-Natal province experiencing its worst year on record —325 rhinos killed, averaging one every 27 hours. EIA analyzed the driving forces behind this crisis, including organized crime, inadequate resources, and corruption, while also highlighting shifting poaching trends, high-profile arrests, and the urgent need for stronger protections to prevent further losses.

2. South Africa's draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy proposes to establish a domestic market for rhino horn products and expand the existing trade in ivory products. EIA submitted formal comments calling for the abandonment of the proposal, and in a blog post, we explain why this attempt to attract foreign tourists will have devastating effects on the conservation of rhinos, elephants, and other endangered species, and create immense complications for enforcement agencies.

3. EIA and 22 other organizations appealed to Japan's Minister of the Environment to lead Japan in closing the domestic elephant ivory market, the world's largest remaining legal ivory market. As Japan's Law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (LCES) undergoes a formal review between 2024 and 2026, the Government of Japan has an opportunity to make meaningful regulatory changes.

4. South Africa's draft Biodiversity Management Plan for rhinos has sparked concern by proposing to open rhino horn trade, which comes on the heels of similar proposals in the draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy and could threaten wild rhino populations by increasing poaching and illegal trade. EIA explained how the plan's domestic rhino horn trade proposals would undermine the international ban on rhino horn trade and conflict with CITES provisions on rhino horn demand reduction. EIA submitted formal comments urging the removal of trade proposals and advocating for demand reduction to protect the species.

5. While Tokyo's leadership had promised reforms to address the city's role in the illegal ivory trade, EIA and the Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund (JTEF) found that Tokyo has been providing subsidies for the domestic ivory industry and supporting efforts to reopen international trade. EIA and JTEF sent a briefing to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), appealing for action, and published a blog and video that highlight why Tokyo needs to address these contradictions. TMG is working to assess their policies in light of our appeal.

6. EIA supported the South African NGO Project Rhino to implement a project improving the deployment and upkeep of license plate recognition cameras in and around protected areas for rhinos in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, which is experiencing the most intense rhino poaching pressure in all of Africa. These cameras are a critical tool for rhino poaching prevention and response in KwaZulu-Natal.

7. EIA engaged in-person with government stakeholders in Tokyo to advocate for the closure of Japan's ivory market via amending the LCES, including representatives from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry, and a member of the National Diet.

8. The unexpected export of 40 white rhinos from Namibia to Texas raised concerns about CITES compliance. EIA looked into this controversial transfer, questioning the purpose of these imports, the interpretation of CITES regulations, Namibia's legal framework, and the broader conservation impact of relocating rhinos outside their natural habitat. EIA called for full transparency to ensure this trade adheres to CITES guidelines and does not jeopardize wild rhino conservation.

Our campaigns seek to:

- Restore healthy populations of wild elephants and rhinos
- Stop the poaching of elephants and rhinos and the illegal trade in their parts and products
- Protect and enhance intact ecosystems for wild elephant and rhino populations

OCEAN

EIA's Ocean campaign works to protect beluga whales across their range, focusing on the critically endangered Cook Inlet population, by advocating for stronger protections, reducing threats, and promoting recovery through research and policy engagement. Additionally, EIA is pushing for global policies to curb underwater noise pollution from commercial shipping, an unregulated and growing threat. By working with the International Maritime Organization, governments, regional stakeholders, and the shipping industry, EIA seeks to implement mandatory noise reduction measures and promote quiet ship technologies to safeguard marine life.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. With cross-campaign collaboration, the Ocean and Extractives campaign teams produced a commissioned report entitled *Bad Prospects*, EIA revealed a network of over 450 companies that are reaping the rewards of gold prospecting in the Alaska-British Columbia transboundary region, using a complex "Prospect Generator Model". Alaskan and First Nations communities are concerned about how industrial activity in the transboundary region will affect salmon and the livelihoods that depend on them. Read more coverage in CBC and Times Colonist.

2. The Alaska Board of Fish approved a reduction of commercially harvested eulachon allowing more critical prey availability for Cook Inlet beluga whales. EIA worked with local Alaskan conservation partners to provide public comment at the Board of Fish hearings.

3. On July 1st, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) implemented a long-awaited ban on the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil (HFO) by shipping companies throughout Arctic waters. EIA and partner organizations then called on IMO member states, particularly Arctic coastal countries, to fully implement and enforce the ban without resorting to loopholes.

4. Ahead of the IMO Marine Environment and Protection Committee meeting, the Ocean team, in collaboration with NRDC, IFAW, and OceanCare, released a briefing on commercial shipping's role in underwater noise pollution. The policy brief highlighted its devastating effects on marine life and called for urgent action from policymakers and the shipping industry to address this growing threat.

5. EIA visited Anchorage and Homer, Alaska, to lead two Community Action Roundtables with local and regional partners, following up on the inaugural Cook Inlet Water Quality Summit held in 2023. These events aimed to foster collaboration on research and policy to improve water quality and habitat for beluga whales, while actively engaging communities along the inlet.

6. At COP 16 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Colombia, EIA co-hosted a side event called *Protecting Marine Biodiversity: Initiatives to Reduce Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping*, with a panel including Panama's Minister of Environment Juan Carlos Navarro. We also hosted a high-level dinner with representatives from various countries to kickstart a High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean. As a result, Panama committed to leading further action on this issue, including raising awareness and driving policy change at events like the 2025 Our Ocean Conference and the UN Ocean Conference.

Our campaigns seek to:

- Restore the population of endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales and other vulnerable marine mammals across their natural ranges
- Prevent ocean habitat destruction to support ecosystem resiliency
- Respect and incorporate the knowledge and practices of Indigenous and local communities when collaboratively developing conservation initiatives

CLIMATE

Preventing runaway climate change and warming of more than 1.5°C requires accelerating emission reductions of potent short-lived climate pollutants, such as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and other fluorinated chemicals. EIA's Climate campaign seeks to eliminate emissions of HFCs and other potent greenhouse gases (GHGs) used primarily in cooling and heating.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Climate Team released their third Climate-Friendly Supermarkets Scorecard assessing the biggest U.S. supermarket chains on their actions to reduce emissions of climate super pollutant hydrofluorocarbons. Of the sixteen companies evaluated, only three received passing scores. This year, ALDI committed to using natural refrigerants in all new and existing stores by 2035, the first U.S. company in the sector to set this target.

2. The Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences published a paper written by EIA US and UK that explores major opportunities under the Montreal Protocol to reduce ozone and climate super-pollutants. In this paper, EIA advocates for strengthened controls on fluorochemical emissions, including better monitoring, reporting, and recovery of old equipment, to further reduce climate-damaging hydrofluorocarbons and nitrous oxide emissions.

3. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized a landmark rule to reduce harmful hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) used in refrigeration and air conditioning. EIA's Climate Campaign Director is mentioned in the announcement and emphasizes that the rule not only cuts emissions by incentivizing HFC reuse and penalizing leaks but also sets a strong global example for regulating climate pollutants in the cooling sector.

4. At Climate Week NYC, Avipsa Mahapatra joined experts for the event *Nitrous Oxide: Science and Governance of a Forgotten Super Pollutant*, where she highlighted the urgent need for action on nitrous oxide (N_2O) emissions. As a significant climate pollutant and ozone-depleting substance, Mahapatra emphasized that industrial N_2O emissions can be reduced through low-cost technologies, yet stronger regulatory measures are essential to safeguard the atmosphere effectively.

5. The major New York supermarket chain Gristedes, which EIA investigated as part of our Leaking Havoc series, has admitted to and accepted responsibility for violations of refrigerant management that led to the substantial release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Gristedes will pay a US$400,000 civil penalty and make extensive repairs, costing millions of dollars, to curb future emissions of harmful refrigerants.

6. Ahead of the 36th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol (MoP36) in Bangkok, EIA released key briefings. *Time to Go Further* urged action on nitrous oxide (N_2O), very short-lived substances, and discrepancies in HFC-23 emissions reporting, emphasizing refrigerant lifecycle management. *Polluting the Protocol* warned of carbon trading's risks to ozone and HFC policies, advocating for a global management framework. *Unchecked* highlighted rising rogue HFC-23 emissions and proposed solutions.

7. For the third year in a row, EIA investigated cooling systems at COP venues and found heavy reliance on harmful refrigerants. At COP29 in Baku, systems used R410A and HCFC-22, with emissions equal to burning 1,220 tons of coal. Despite the Global Cooling Pledge, sustainable cooling was ignored. EIA urged Azerbaijan to ratify the Kigali Amendment and called on the UNFCCC to mandate climate-friendly cooling at future COPs.

8. In collaboration with Green America and YouthPower Climate Action, EIA investigated refrigerant leaks at 28 Northern California supermarkets, including Safeway, Walmart, and Save Mart. Our report, *Leaking Havoc in Northern California* reveals that 50% of these locations had emissions of HFCs, potent greenhouse gases with thousands of times the warming potential of CO_2. EIA urged stricter enforcement, zero-leak policies, and transitions to natural refrigerants to reduce these harmful emissions.

To maximize the immediate climate benefits that can be achieved by eliminating super-pollutant HFCs, we seek to:

- Ensure robust implementation and enforcement of the Kigali Amendment to avoid up to 0.4°C by the end of this century.
- Accelerate the HFC phase-down schedule under the Montreal Protocol and maximize energy efficiency co-benefits.
- Prevent lifecycle emissions of all existing HFCs and other fluorinated refrigerants, mitigating up to an additional 100Gt CO_2e in direct emissions by 2100.
- Unlock U.S. leadership through innovative policy solutions and comprehensive implementation of the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act.

FOREST

Forests are being lost at an alarming rate around the globe, much of it due to illegal logging and forest conversion for agricultural commodities, often fueled by international demand and global markets. EIA conducts groundbreaking investigations to document and expose forest crimes and works in alliance with local partners to support environmental defenders and to strengthen the rights of forest communities. We focus on evidence-based campaigns to achieve policy and regulatory reforms that transform entire sectors and work to increase transparency in global supply chains, including through the deployment of traceability systems and innovative technology.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. EIA reported how palm oil and cocoa companies are *Carving up the Amazon* and driving deforestation in Peru, committing illegalities with government complicity. Peru's Congress recently approved legislation that legalized much of the deforestation outlined in the investigation—violating Indigenous rights and the Peruvian Constitution, while using the EU Deforestation Regulation as a false pretext. The law, which is being opposed by indigenous organizations, small farmers, and NGOs, will give bad actors impunity, setting a dangerous precedent that may lead to even more destruction. Read more coverage in Reuters and Mongabay.

2. EIA joined investigative journalists to document links between illegal cattle ranching in the Brazilian Amazon and international leather supply chains. The documentary film which aired on one of Germany's largest public broadcasters - ARD, follows EIA's investigation, *Deforestation in the Driver's Seat*, and provides an inside look into EIA's use of data journalism and undercover fieldwork. The film is a stark reminder of why demand-side regulations such as the U.S. FOREST Act are needed to help stop global deforestation.

3. EIA released the report *Failing the Forest*, with findings from eight years of EIA investigations into timber supply chains, connecting crimes in the Congo Basin forests to consumers in the U.S. EIA's research and analysis demonstrated thatHome Depot sold illegal timber at a massive scale to its consumers for over a decade. In response to EIA's investigation, Home Depot dismantled the tainted supply chain and took broader measures aimed at limiting the company's dependence on opaque Asian processing hubs, particularly in China.

4. EIA reported how cattle raised illegally in an indigenous territory in the Brazilian Amazon are laundered into the supply chains of meat and leather giant JBS. As the majority of Brazilian leather is exported, the report highlights the need for mandatory traceability and for consumer countries to stop importing goods that contribute to deforestation. While the EU has recently passed the EUDR to this effect, in the U.S., EIA continues to advocate for the passing of the FOREST Act, which would prohibit the imports of commodities linked to illegal deforestation.

5. EIA's report *Shipping the Forest* exposed how Chinese traffickers are plundering valuable wood species from insurgent-controlled areas in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. Since 2017, over 500,000 tons of timber per year have been illegally exported to China, funding violent insurgents and fueling the crisis. Systemic corruption in the timber sector and lack of due diligence from global shipping lines enable the laundering of this "conflict timber." Despite the Miombo Forest Initiative, illegal logging continues, costing Mozambique up to half a billion dollars annually. Listen to BBC's coverage.

6. EIA continued its efforts to protect endangered African rosewood. Our latest investigation shows that freshly cut timber is being laundered through Sierra Leone's stockpiles in anticipation of a potential reopening of trade. EIA is actively working to ensure that illegal trade remains halted and that regional conservation efforts are upheld, protecting both this vulnerable species and the health of the planet's forests.

7. Our report, *Until the Last Log*, exposed systemic illegalities in the DRC's industrial logging sector, revealing widespread violations by companies like Wan Peng and Booming Green, including quota breaches, bribery, and species misreporting. With 94% of concessions operating illegally, EIA called on the DRC to enforce log export bans, uphold protections, and safeguard its vital rainforests for biodiversity and climate action.

8. EIA published *Ill Wind*, which revealed the illegal logging and Indigenous rights abuses connected to the growing demand for balsa wood used in wind turbine blades. EIA conducted a groundbreaking multi-year investigation linking illegal logging in the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazon to major wind turbine manufacturers like GE Vernova, Goldwind, and Mingyang. Despite widespread knowledge of these issues, companies have failed to control balsa wood sourcing, enabling deforestation and human rights violations. Check out our Supply Chain Map for more.

We aim to secure a future in which forests around the world are governed more equitably, transparently, and responsibly. To realize this future, we:

- Instigate reform and law enforcement in forest countries to establish forest governance based on the rights and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and local communities.
- Transform global trade and consumption patterns to eliminate deforestation and human rights violations from international supply chains.
- Increase accountability and deter environmental crimes through transparency and traceability in commodity supply chains and transparent trade data.

EXTRACTIVES

EIA's extractives campaign addresses the urgent social and environmental challenges posed by the extractive industries–including their role in driving climate change, human rights violations, corruption, and environmental destruction. As national regulations remain weak or poorly enforced, frontline communities continue to lead efforts to resist harmful practices through advocacy and direct action. EIA supports these efforts through four key pillars: building local capacity for people-led monitoring, conducting strategic investigations, amplifying grassroots initiatives, and advocating for systemic policy changes to ensure transparency, accountability, and equitable governance.

2024 HIGHLIGHTS

1. In 2024 we launched our new Extractive Industries Campaign, which aims to combat the global impacts of mining and fossil fuel supply chains by promoting equity, amplifying local voices, and driving systemic policy changes for a fair and sustainable energy transition. The new campaign focuses its efforts on maximizing synergies with existing EIA campaigns, such as mining expansion in critical forests (*Three Basins, Three Battlegrounds*), dodgy financial schemes fueling mining expansion in critical wildlife habitats (*Bad Prospects*), and international trafficking of hyper toxic minerals like mercury (*Mercury in Retrograde*).

2. In collaboration with our Congolese partner, Premi Congo, EIA's research on the environmental and public health impacts of critical minerals mining in the DRC was featured in the documentary *Operation Africa.The hunt for the raw materials of the future*. The film premiered in November at the Körber Foundation event in Hamburg, ahead of its release on the European public service channel, Arte. Preliminary findings on the links between mercury contamination, ecosystem degradation, corruption, and the global gold market were also presented in the documentary *Switzerland and Gold* on Swiss National TV in December.

3. EIA stood alongside frontline community coalitions and grassroots alliances in several Latin American and African countries, supporting their resistance to some of the most harmful practices of the oil, gas, and critical minerals industries. These communities—often directly impacted by the operations of powerful, foreign-based multinationals—are leading the charge for environmental justice and accountability. We equipped grassroots groups with investigative tools, data-driven insights, and strategic support to expose illegal practices and defend their land, human health, and human rights.

4. EIA worked with local communities and the Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Protection de l'Environnement (MJPE) to oppose oil block auctions in the DRC that were launched without the free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities. The expansive auction, encompassing over 11 million hectares of pristine tropical forest, raised significant concerns among communities and environmental organizations, particularly in the Cuvette Centrale peatlands. The concerted opposition led to the canceling its auction of 27 oil blocks in October 2024. While the DRC has recently relaunched the auctions, opposing them will remain an urgent priority moving forward in our advocacy and engagement.

This campaign aims to:

- Reduce mining impacts and injustices around the world by fighting power imbalance through hard-hitting investigation-led campaigns
- Amplify local voices and frontline communities' fights for their rights
- Advocate for ambitious and grounded policy shifts, particularly in terms of energy transition, which position transparency and equity at the heart of any supply chain

EIA US
PO Box 53343
Washington, D.C. 20009 USA
T: +1 202 483-6621
E: info@eia-global.org
eia.org

environmental investigation agency