

An underwater photograph showing a large amount of plastic waste, including a white plastic bag and a long white plastic strip, floating in the water. Several black and white striped fish are swimming around the debris. The water is a deep blue color.

Illicit activities against the environment

Hotspots, impacts
and security culture

2023

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This is an **interactive document**

Illicit activities against the environment.
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01

**A sustainable
world mindset**



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01 A SUSTAINABLE WORLD MINDSET

We are in a time of social transformation, a time to focus on people, their environment and the way they organize themselves. Society is becoming aware of the great responsibility of living in a changing world and the importance of **generating ecosystems of responsible people and businesses**. However, protecting nature cannot paralyze companies; respecting the law and understanding that growth and innovation go hand in hand with social and environmental issues requires looking to the future with optimism and with a **sustainable world mindset** that is henceforth transformed into business actions.

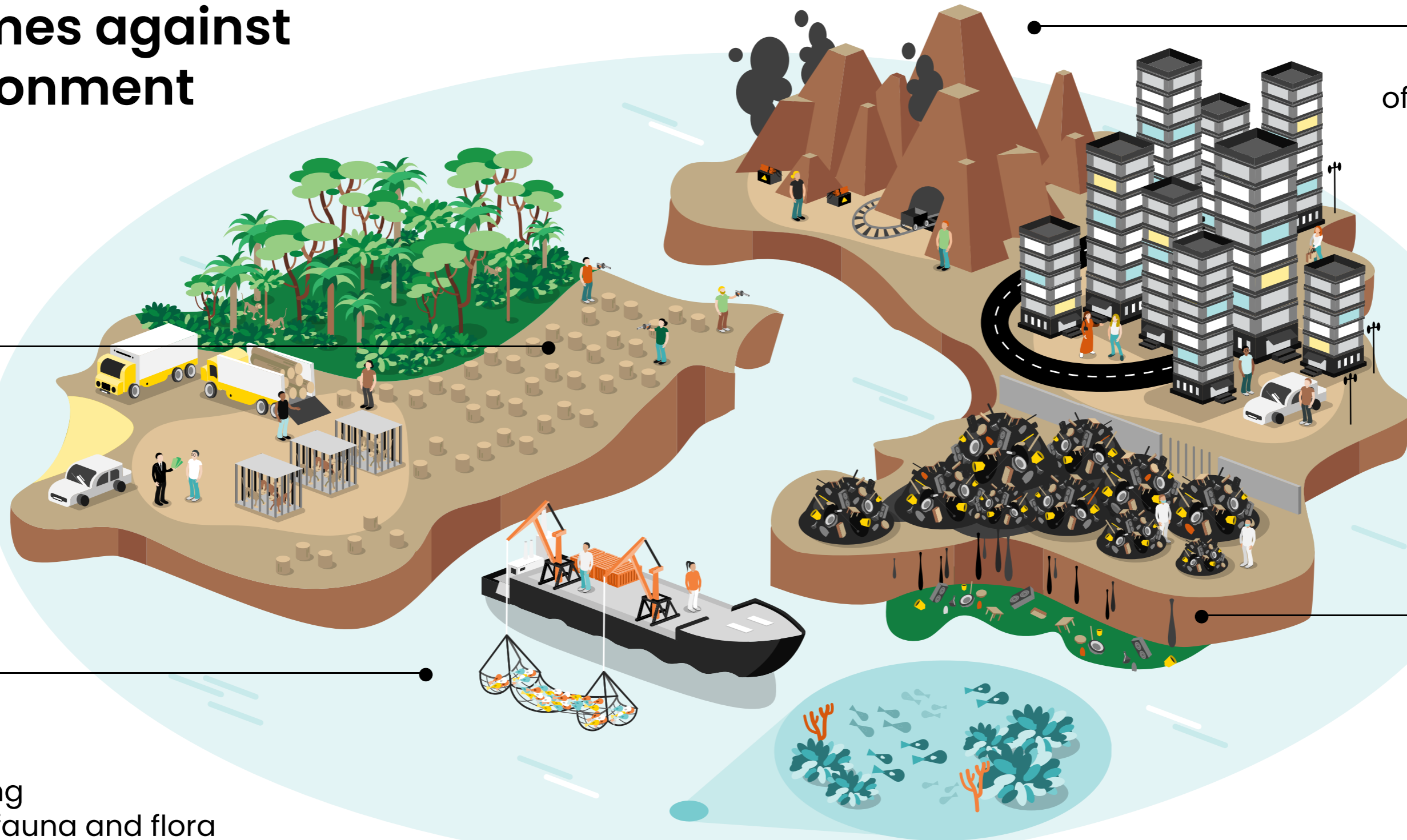
Through this analysis, Prosegur Research aims to highlight the value for companies engaged in all types of activities to comply with the law and enrich societal progress, as well as to identify the importance of having a culture of security while respecting the environment. To this end, we identify **the most common illicit activities** of those entities, criminal organizations and individuals who do not care for nature by respecting the rules of the game and tend to forget that it is an ecosystem shared by all, and thus exposing the significant **impacts in terms of security** that these illegal activities entail.

The daily activities of all organizations generate an **ecological footprint** and, progressively, a greater awareness is being acquired in order to **decrease the possible impacts** on our ecosystems. Consequently, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, such as timber or marine fauna, among others, directly and indirectly harms all the people and companies that comply with the law and **take responsibility for the footprint they are leaving on the planet.**

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Main crimes against the environment

Forestry crime



Illegal exploitation of mining resources

Wildlife crime

- Poaching
- Irregular fishing
- Trafficking of fauna and flora

Illegal waste management

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02

Main crimes

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02 MAIN CRIMES



2.1 Wildlife crime

Wildlife crime is one **of the main challenges for the preservation of ecosystems and habitats worldwide**, since, in parallel to other illicit businesses -drug trafficking, arms trafficking or smuggling, among

others-, it constitutes a **global and transnational market**, with logistical and clientele networks, and is a major threat to the preservation of ecosystems and habitats.

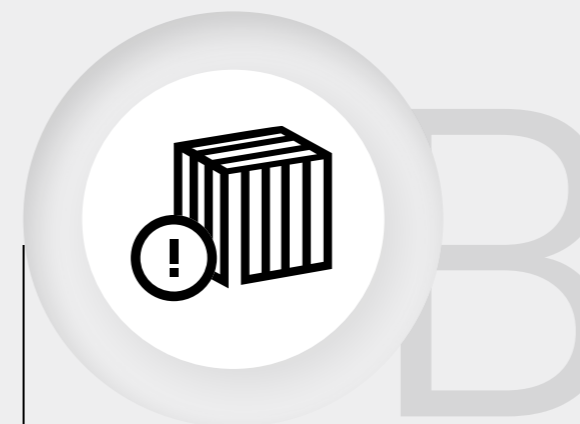
Graphic 1
Main wildlife offenses

Source: Prosegur, 2023



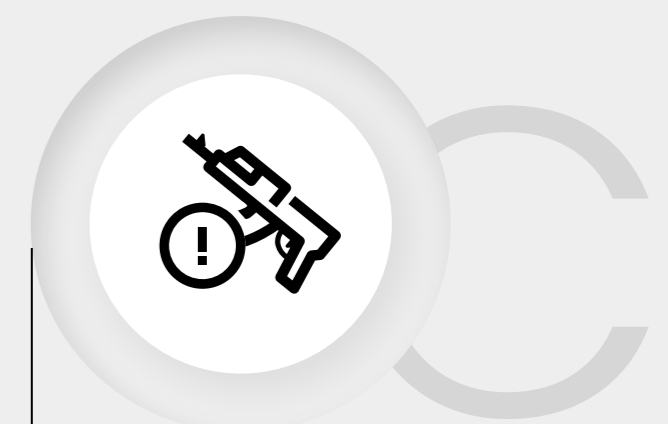
Irregular fishing

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing refers to those activities which are carried out without a license or infringe current legislation in some way.



Possession and illegal trade of species

Possession of and trade in protected species or derived products.



Poaching

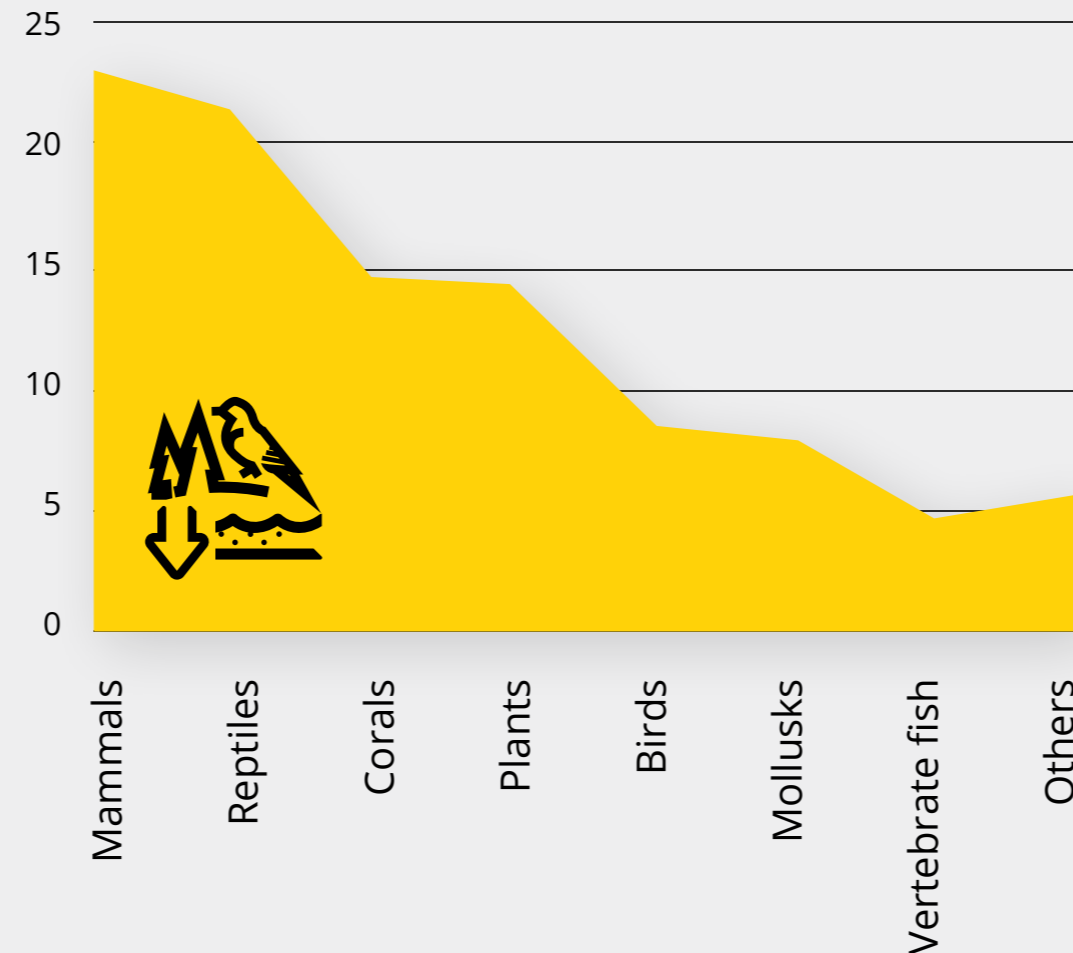
Capturing of wild animals for a profit, for subsequent trafficking or subsistence purposes.

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The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international and intergovernmental agreement that came into effect in 1975 and currently has 184 signatory countries, with the aim of ensuring the appropriate international trade of more than 38,000 specimens so that it does not constitute a threat to their survival and become a target for unsustainable exploitation. Therefore, **crimes against fauna and flora are understood as the possession, trade and/or trafficking of species protected by these regulations** - and other domestic laws - **in addition to the products derived from them.**

As TRAFFIC¹ has pointed out, **wildlife trafficking is one of the greatest threats to species conservation**, since it is estimated that illegal wildlife trafficking (IWT) may be greater than activity in the legal markets. In fact, **this illicit trade is considered the fourth largest in the world**, after drug trafficking, smuggling and human trafficking. In this regard, criminal groups steal natural **resources worth between US\$90 billion and US\$258 billion annually**. Wildlife trafficking is estimated to be worth between **US\$7 billion and US\$23 billion per year**, with an annual **increase in crimes committed reaching approximately 5%**.

Graphic 2
Percentage of seizures
between 1999 and 2018



Source: Prosegur 2023, based on UNODC

The latest **World Wildlife Crime Report** of the United Nations (UN) shows a heterogeneous distribution of the more than **170 000 seizures made between the years 1999 and 2018**, with mammals, reptiles and corals occupying the top positions.

Similar to wildlife trafficking, illegal hunting and fishing have a multitude of economic, social, and environmental consequences, especially for countries suffering from the **overexploitation of resources**.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, also known as IUU fishing, has a severe impact by **depleting populations of marine species, destroying habitats, weakening coastal communities** in developing countries and **harming competition and law-abiding businesses**. In fact, **illegal fishing constitutes a highly lucrative market worldwide**: data indicates that this phenomenon can reach up to **26 million tons per year and with a value estimated to exceed \$20 billion**.

Illegal hunting or poaching is defined as the **capture of wild animals, often for subsequent trafficking or for their by-products**, such as skins or tusks, among others.

¹ A non-governmental organization dedicated to monitoring wildlife and plant trafficking around the world.

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On other occasions poaching is related to **subsistence or recreational purposes**, as it is also used as a means to obtain traditional medicines or for local meat consumption as a consequence of elevated levels of poverty. However, hunting for subsistence or medicinal purposes can be directly related to trafficking crimes, as in the case of the pangolin in China, which in recent years has become the most **trafficked mammal in the world** due to the sanitary value of its scales.

In recent decades there has been an **average decline of 69% in the relative population abundance of animal species around the world**, the greatest decline recorded in Central and South America, with a 94% drop, whereby all of the above-mentioned illicit activities underscore the importance of preserving ecosystems and the short-, medium- and long-term effects of their deterioration on species, habitats and societies.

In addition, **the trafficking of illegally hunted animals is carried out through both illicit and licit channels** and coupled with **the lack of specific regulation** in many States, has historically complicated the task of governments and environmental organizations to oversee and monitor the illegal trade in protected species.



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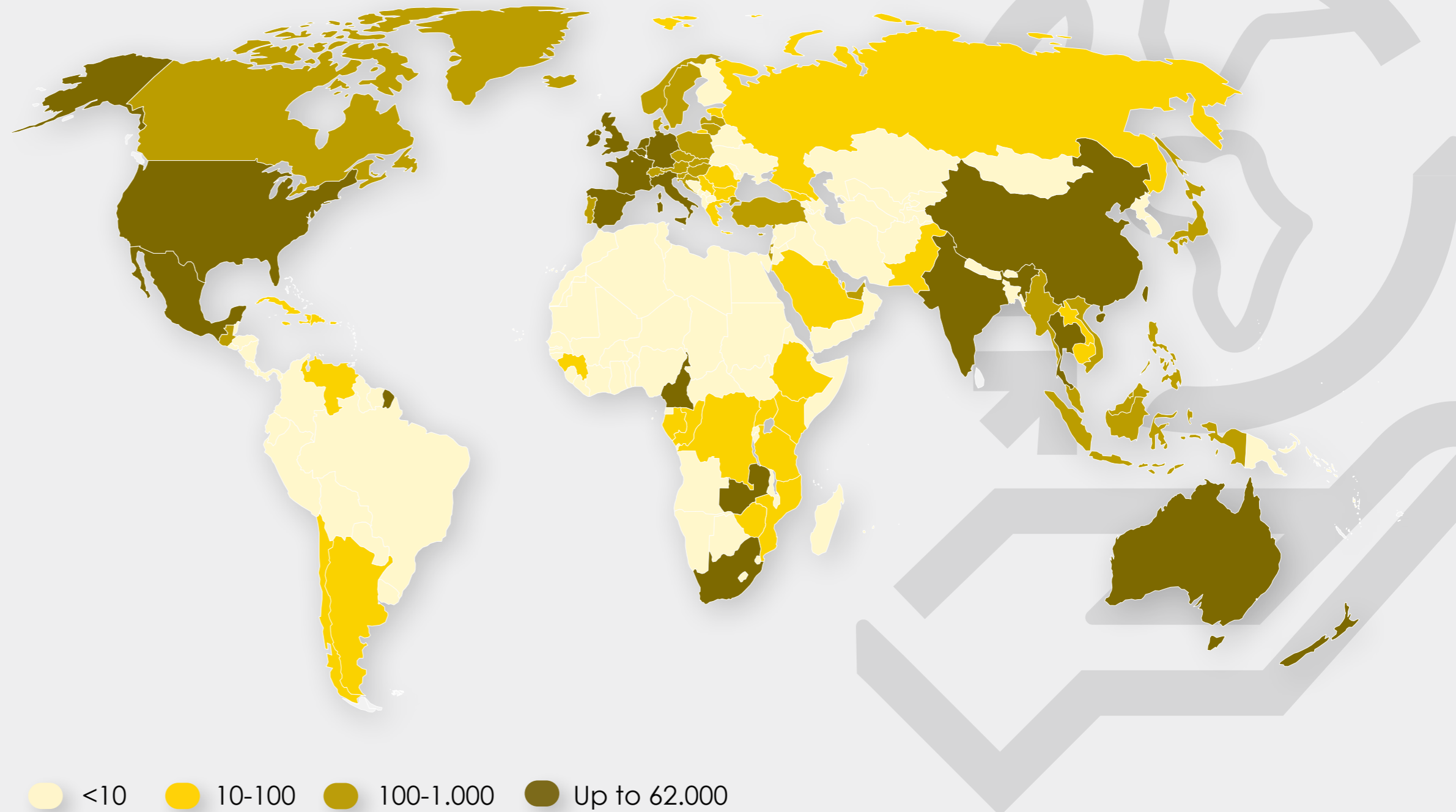
RISK HOTSPOTS

From a geographical perspective, specialized reports on organized crime indicate that **Asia and Africa are some of the origin markets for environmental products**, including fauna, flora, and others such as minerals or precious stones. Thus, these two continents are the only ones to have featured environmental markets **among their top five criminal businesses**. For example, in Sub-Saharan African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, the high value in biodiversity and wildlife have driven the demand for illegal hunting and trafficking of animals and products such as **rhino horn and elephant ivory**, which has led to both species becoming endangered.

Other regions such as **Europe, North America or some Asian countries** like Malaysia, the Philippines, China, Thailand, and Vietnam stand out as **hotspot destinations**. In addition, countries such as Spain, due to its **geostrategic position**, are configured as locations of origin, transit, and destination.

However, if certain states or regions stand out as points of origin, transit and/or destination, as we have mentioned above, **the data indicates that practically all the countries in the world play some kind of role in this transnational market:**

Graphic 3
Number of wildlife trafficking seizures
by country between 2004 and 2015

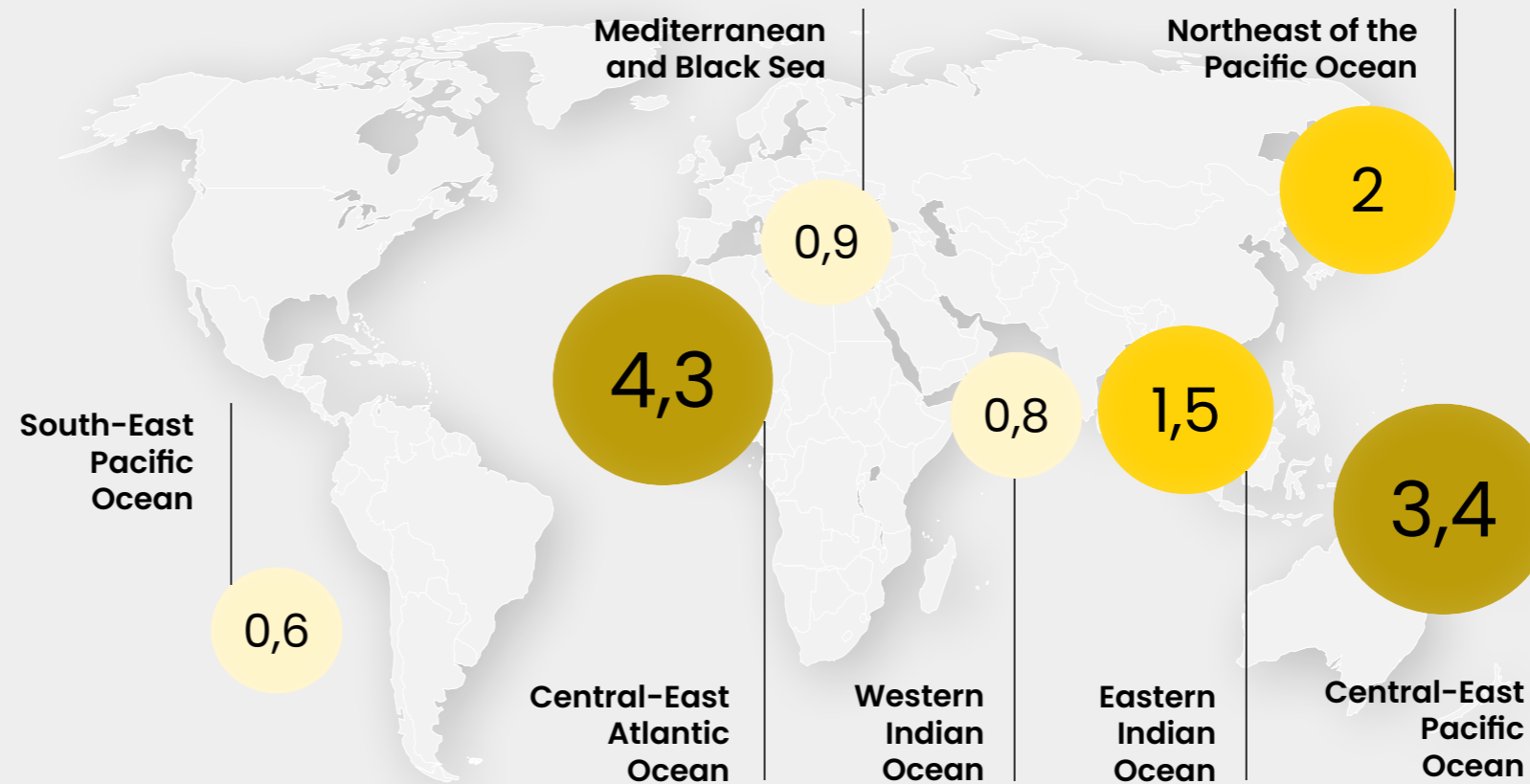


Source: Prosegur 2023, based on **UNODC**

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In addition, the *IUU Fishing Index* indicates that the **countries most affected by illegal fishing are China, Russia, South Korea, Somalia, and Yemen**, while Estonia, Finland, Sweden, New Zealand and Belize obtain the best scores.

At an economic level, the data indicates that **the Asian-pacific and the Atlantic Ocean Region have the highest income losses from this illicit trade**, with spillover effects on other widespread problems such as **food insecurity** and **unemployment** among local populations:



Graphic 4
Average annual loss of gross income from illegal maritime fishing (in billions of US dollars)

Source: Prosecur 2023, based on *Statista*

A World Bank report notes that **low-income countries are particularly affected by these illicit activities**, as they are highly dependent on natural resources, including fisheries and timber resources, constituting a source of commercial opportunities.

Illegal fishing has emerged as one of the main sources of risks for the preservation of ecosystems and as a **geopolitical tool** in the Arctic, especially in places such as the Barents Sea or the Bering Sea. Thus, fishing has been recognized as the **playground for "gray zone" warfare**, and in the Arctic, there are several actors that play a more or less predominant role, such as Russia, the United States, Norway, Finland, and Denmark - the "Arctic Five" -, and

others such as China. The well-known **"Arctic Route"** is an **alternative to the global and traditional Suez Canal** supply chain proposed mainly by Russia, which also constitutes a reserve of raw materials. In addition, **control of this route**, in what has come to be known as Arctic governance, would make it easier to obtain natural resources such as iron, tin or palladium.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the so-called **cyber-enabled wildlife trafficking**, or, in other words, the trafficking of fauna and flora promoted by online platforms. The last two decades have seen an exponential increase in the number of people accessing the Internet in many countries, especially in Africa, which recorded **the highest increase amongst all continents** between 2000 and 2021. This has led to **the proliferation of**

illicit markets on the Internet and the interconnection and communication between criminal gangs in different geographical locations. For example, a 2017 study in France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom reported **more than 5,000 ads and posts in 106 marketplaces and social networks such as Twitter and Instagram in just six weeks**, with up to 11,700 specimens detected at a value of close to four million dollars. This has since led to countries like Nigeria becoming logistical hubs, while in China more than 300,000 online advertisements have been shut down in just one year, particularly those affecting **species such as the elephant, rhinoceros, and pangolins.**

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2.2 Forestry Crimes

Illegal logging refers to the **extraction of timber from forests and protected areas without the respective permission** of the competent authorities, or in disobedience of established forestry laws and regulations. This illicit activity includes both the extraction of timber from trees in protected areas outside the limits of legal forest exploitation, as well as the extraction of trees that have been cut without authorization in any other area.

On the other hand, **timber trafficking is defined as the illegal activity of trading in illegally harvested timber or timber products**. It includes the extraction or felling, transport, processing, laundering and commercialization of timber by means of false documentation. **INTERPOL includes both procedures within the framework of the so-called forestry crimes**.

This illicit activity is one of the main problems that threatens **the preservation of ecosystems and habitats worldwide**, since it affects both the flora and fauna of the affected area, leading to the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of the livelihoods of the

communities that depend on them. In addition, it also contributes to gas emissions as a result of deforestation and forest degradation.

The clandestine nature of this activity makes it difficult to measure accurately. However, there is data which provides an indication of its volume. According to INTERPOL, it is estimated **that illegal timber trafficking accounts for between 15 and 30 between 15% and 30% of all global trade in timber, and that logging accounts for between 51 to 152 billion dollars annually**.

There are many groups that, for one reason or another, are key players in this illicit trade being that it constitutes a multi-faceted problem. Among them are illegal loggers and organized crime groups, which tend to be involved in the entire process, main extractors and buyers and traders of illegal timber, as well as local authorities or the consumers themselves being that they are necessary participants for the crime.

The high demand for timber worldwide, which reached new highs in 2021 and 2022, suggests that **organized crime groups are likely to become more active** in this area, as the sector's large profit margins can be of significant use in financing their operations.



RISK HOTSPOTS

Forest crime **is not a problem exclusive to a particular country or region**, but affects many areas around the world, especially where forests are particularly rich in biodiversity and where regulation and control over forestry activities are weaker.

Geographically, **Central and South America, specifically the Amazon areas, is one of the regions with the highest rate of deforestation in the world** due to illegal logging and the expansion of agriculture and cattle ranching, whereby Brazil and Bolivia stand out, in addition to all the countries that share the Amazon. According to **INTERPOL**, this extensive zone is home to 50% of the planet's biodiversity and a quarter of the world's tropical forests and is one of the main sources of the global timber trade, both legal and illegal.

In Africa, timber procurement began to grow in the early 2000s; boosted by the rise of the middle class in China and its increased demand. **Various organizations** indicate that a significant portion of African timber valued on the international market, such as rosewood, ebony, and oak, has been obtained illegally.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the most affected countries, not only on the continent but also

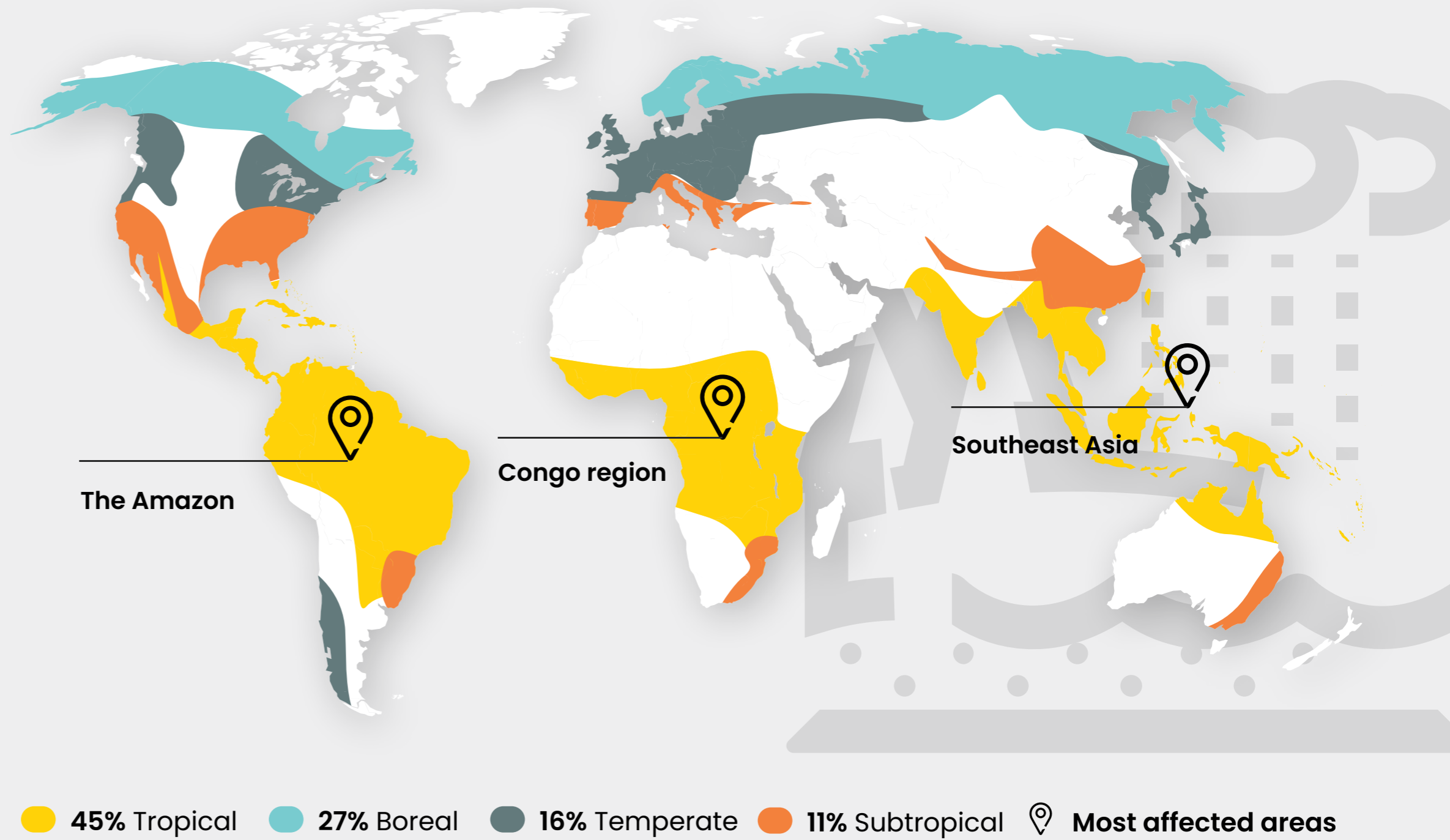
worldwide, for this illicit trade. The country is home to the second largest tropical forest in the world, which makes it especially vulnerable to illegal logging. **The Congo region**, in equatorial Africa, is one of the key hubs for the export of illegally harvested timber to Europe and Asia. **Southeast Asia's tropical forests** are also under threat, especially in **Indonesia**, another of the world's most affected areas, along with the Amazon, mainly due to the expansion of the palm oil industry.



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Specialized reports on organized crime indicate that countries with widespread illegal logging are more likely to also suffer from other crimes such as illegal wildlife trade, as **both criminal markets are highly correlated.**

Graphic 5
Proportion and distribution of the world's forest area by climatic zone



Source: Prosegur 2023, based on **FAO**

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2.3 Illegal exploitation of mineral resources

Illegal mining is a phenomenon from which no country in the world is exempt; however, it especially affects those countries that have a combination, either generally or locally, great mineral wealth and weak governance.

Specifically, illegal mining is defined as the **extraction of minerals or precious stones without the necessary authorizations or requirements according to the law**. In addition to illegal mining, there is also a **deterioration in the safety of the environment**, as it is eminently linked to organized crime or the activities of armed insurgent groups, who often use **violence and intimidation** as a method of conducting this activity.

In this respect, **the high value of certain materials increases the attractiveness** of mining for these groups, who include it, together with the smuggling of extracted

materials and the creation of clientele networks in the black market, as part of their financing methods. Thus, money laundering, tax fraud, corruption and the undermining of institutions have become other indirect consequences that illegal mining generates at the socio-economic level. According to **UNODC**, the **high profits** from this activity and the **minimal risk of prosecution** in some regions of the world have **boosted the interest and presence of organized crime** in illegal mining in recent years. In this regard, as per **INTERPOL**, illegal mining generates approximately 12-48 billion dollars a year, causing high damage to public revenues.

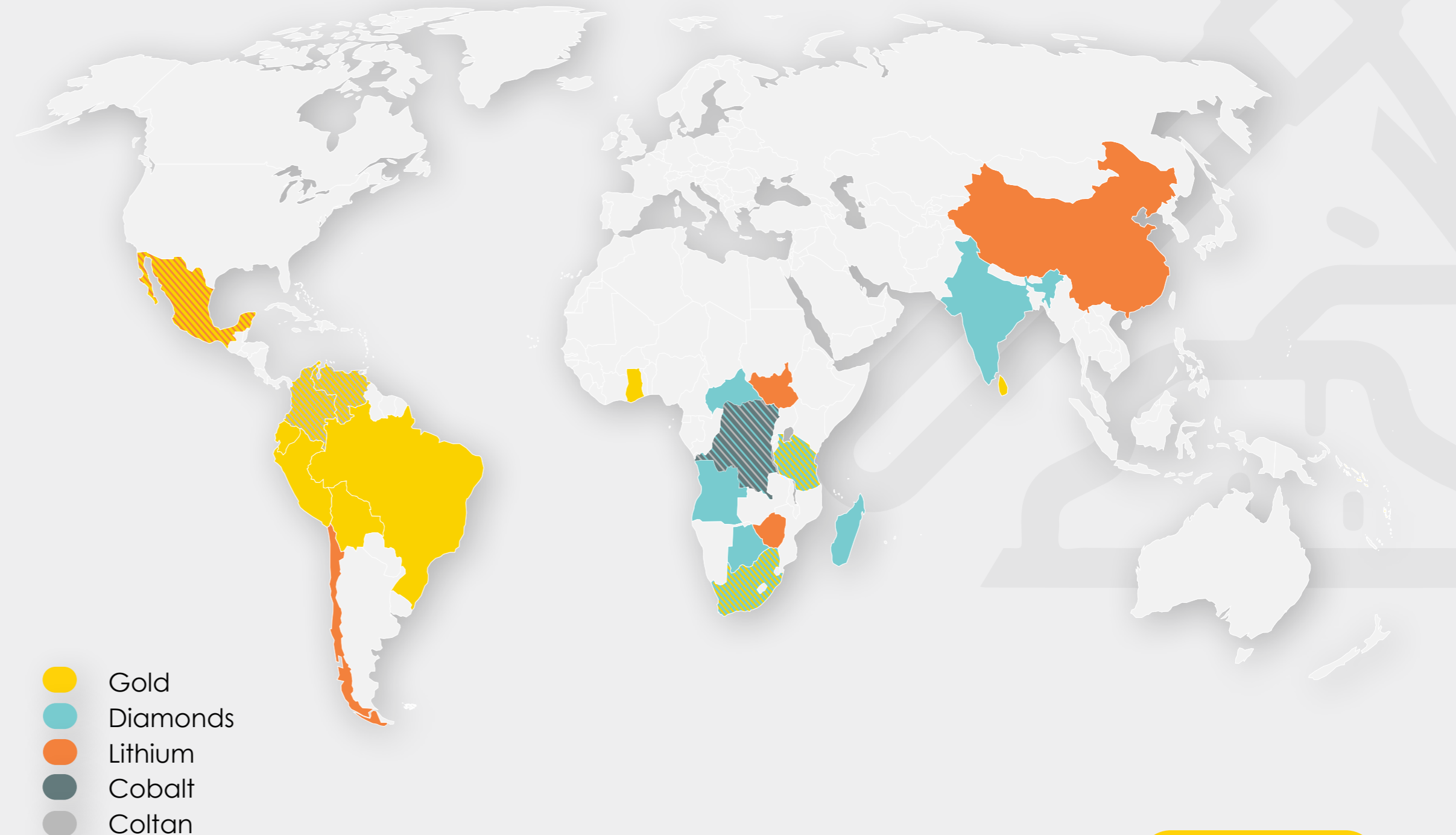


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The **geographic location** of mineral reserves and **fluctuations in their value** determine the location of illegal mining, although its emergence is highly influenced by other **macro-social variables**, such as low state control, the absence of legal norms, armed conflicts, and periods of high political instability. Thus, there are currently different risk hotspots scattered throughout the world, among which we can distinguish those dedicated to the extraction of **diamonds and gold**. However, given their growing importance in the illegal mineral market, the illicit mining of **lithium, cobalt, coltan and other materials such as gold and diamonds is of particular importance:**

Graphic 6
Areas of special relevance in the illicit extraction of minerals
Source: Prosegur, 2023



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The extraction of minerals - mainly gold - in Central and South America is strongly linked to **drug trafficking activity and armed insurgent groups**. Cartels of Mexican origin - such as the Sinaloa, Jalisco Nueva Generación or Los Zetas - use illegal mining as one of their sources for financing and territorial control. This activity has also been linked to insurgent groups such as the FARC and ELN in Colombia.

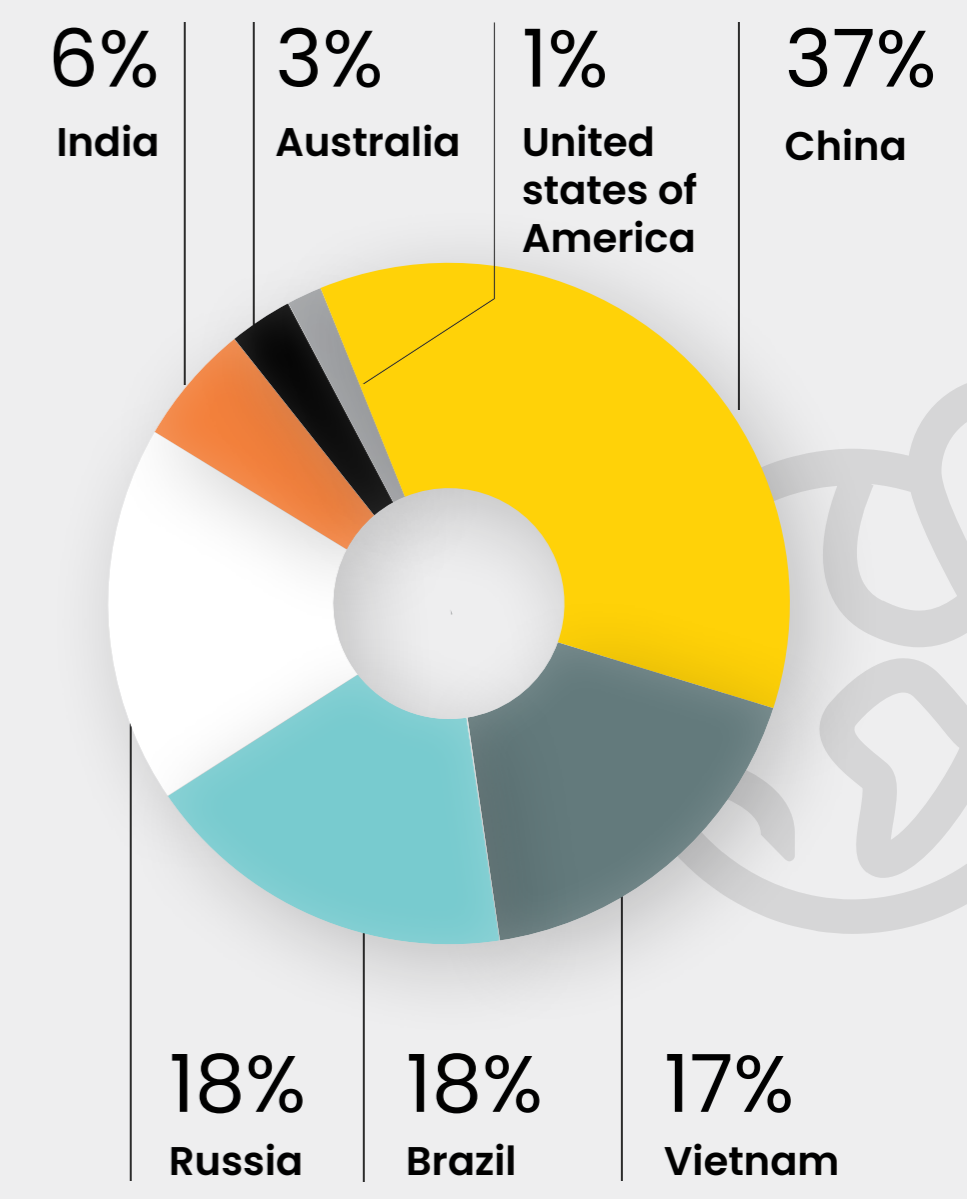
In Africa and Asia, it is particularly relevant in some countries with abundant diamond and gold reserves, where the State lacks sufficient capacity to control all mining operations. Therefore, there are countries with a high proportion of **clandestine miners**, such as **India** or, to a greater extent, **South Africa**, where the so-called "zamazamas"² take advantage of old deposits to extract large quantities of gold, generating an underground economy that, according to various estimates, accounts for 10% of total gold extraction. Illegal mining also occurs in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, where, together with gold and diamonds, there are significant reserves of Coltan, of which has a growing importance in the energy market.

Illegal mining carried out in some regions of **China** is also noted, where cases have been reported of mining companies exceeding and failing to comply with local standards established in domestic legislation. The city of Yichun, in Jiangxi province, is considered the lithium "capital" of Asia, where state authorities acknowledge that they are conducting investigations into illegal mining activities linked to unlicensed operations and organized crime³.

Finally, **the growing role of renewable energy** has increased interest in obtaining the materials necessary for its production, which - together with lithium and coltan - highlights the growing importance of rare earths, one of the most demanded resources worldwide and a possible new focus of risk for the emergence of illegal mining.

² According to *The New Yorker*.
³ According to *YiCai*.

Graphic 7
Mayores reservas de tierras raras



Source: Prosegur, 2023 based on **PWC**

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2.4 Illegal waste and waste Management

Illegal waste management refers to activities related to the **disposal, collection, transportation, treatment, disposal, utilization, or any other activity related to waste without complying with the rules** and regulations established by the competent authorities and the law. This includes activities such as the disposal of waste in unauthorized areas, mishandling of waste such as mixing hazardous with non-hazardous waste or burning it, exporting it without the necessary permits, operating waste management facilities without a license, or spillage into rivers or bodies of water, among others. Waste covers a broad spectrum of materials: from household items, electrical and electronic equipment to industrial and agricultural waste, among others.

These crimes are currently a very profitable and **growing economic activity**. **The Basel Institute** states that waste trafficking generates profits for criminal groups of up to 12 billion per year. Likewise, **INTERPOL**, in one of its latest reports on the links between organized crime and pollution crime, notes that the profits from the 27 cases examined by the agency amounted to US\$500 million. The report also shows the link between criminal networks and

legitimate waste management companies, which are used as a front for illegal operations. In a previous report in 2020, the institution had already highlighted a significant increase in the illicit trade in plastic waste worldwide. Over a period of two years there was an **increase in illegal waste shipments, mainly destined for Southeast Asia through multiple transit countries to hide the origin of the waste shipment**, as well as an **increase in the number of fires and illegal waste dumps in Europe and Asia**. They also highlight a significant increase in the **use of forged documents and fraudulent documentation regarding waste**.

According to several reports, the most relevant patterns of action focus, on the one hand, on the **infiltration of organized crime groups in the waste management sector** and, on the other hand, on legitimate companies that operate in the sector, but apply practices outside the environmental regulations to increase their profits. According to the **World Bank**, waste is expected to increase between 2016 and 2050 by 70%, in line with the increase in world population and higher standards of living, which represents an opportunity for the various stakeholders to expand their activities and further aggravate the existing illegal situation, as well as its consequences.



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The particular circumstances of this illicit waste, characterized by the **difficulty in distinguishing between licit and illicit waste and in identifying its origin**, make it difficult to have a clear map of international illicit waste flows, as well as knowing the extent of the impact they can have on the environment as their consequences are delayed or become apparent in the event of natural disasters.

In this regard, the **World Customs Organization** itself points out that there is not enough data available to have a clear idea of the international illicit waste routes to facilitate the development of policies and operations to combat them. However, some non-profit organizations, such as GRID - Arendal, of Norwegian origin, which already identified in 2015 that **Europe, North America, Japan and Australia are the main source regions and the areas of Southeast and South Asia and the westernmost part of Africa as the receiving areas**, which coincide with those countries that, legally, also receive more waste⁴.

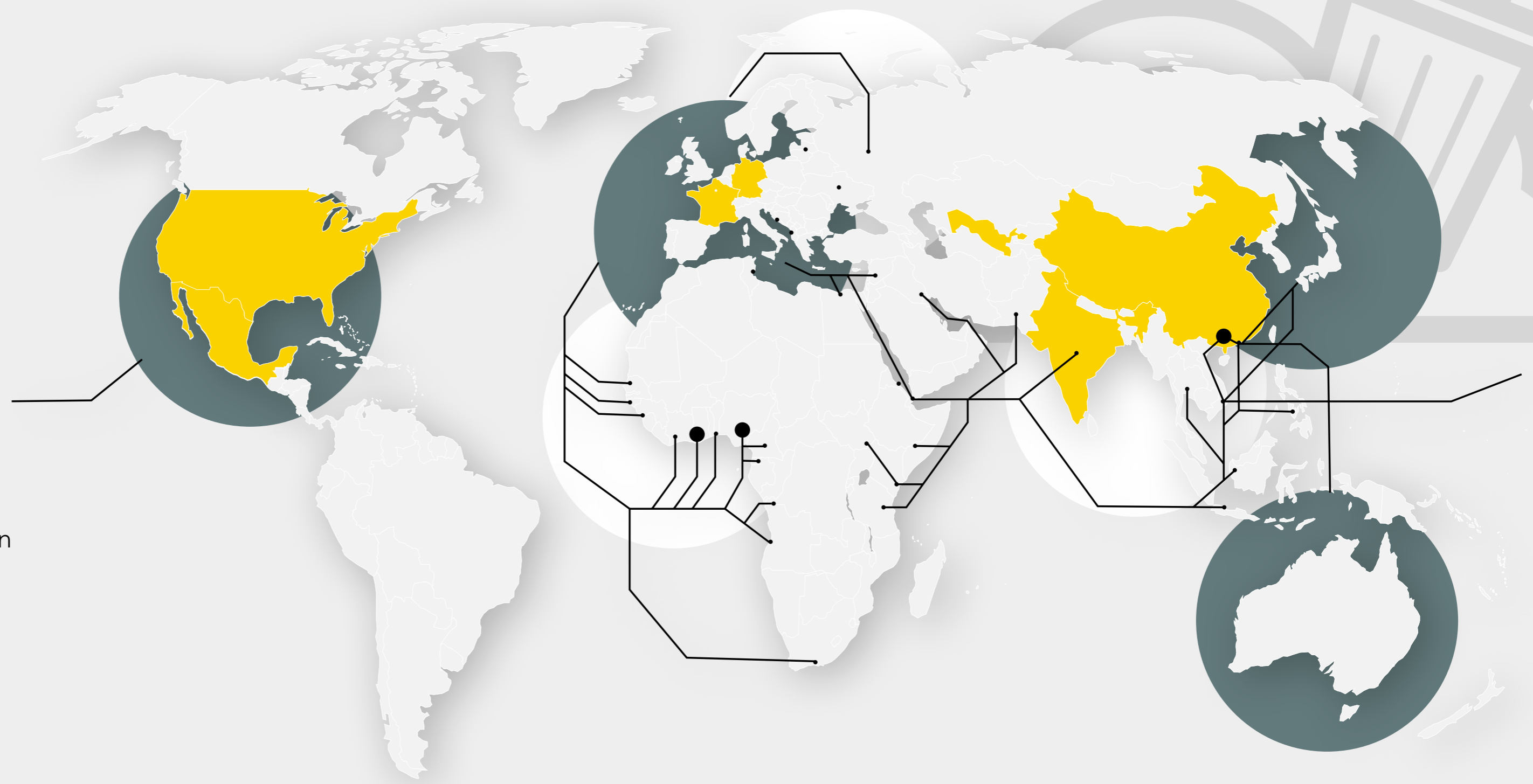
In addition to these countries, consideration should be given to those with an elevated risk of waste congestion, since the increased demand for waste managers is an opportunity to obtain profits by facilitating the emergence of groups and/or companies that take illegal routes to process waste. These countries include **Mexico, India, and Uzbekistan**, which import large volumes of hazardous waste. Furthermore, third-party countries such as **Germany, France, the United States and China have become predominant net exporters**, which also encourages the action of actors taking advantage of legal flows and operations.

⁴ According to *world-wide waste web*.



Graphic 8
Main routes
and key
points for
illegal waste
trafficking

- Major waste exporters
- Main routes
- Region of origin
- Region of destination
- Main trafficking destination
- Countries where the illegal export of waste has been demonstrated



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03

Impacts at all levels

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IMPACTS AT ALL LEVELS

Wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, illegal exploitation of mineral resources and illegal waste management have a multitude of consequences at all levels - political, social, and economic - with a **significant impact on security and, particularly, on the environment.** Although the security aspect of their effects is detailed below, a few facts will help us

to understand the magnitude of their impact at the economic level: the economic toll linked to environmental crime amounts to 2 trillion dollars if logging, illegal fishing, or wildlife trafficking are all taken into account.



Political capital
Difficulties with governance, corruption, and reputation.



Financial capital
Issues with revenue, taxes, and tax evasion.



Social capital
Crises related to the cost of living, unemployment, and health.



Ecological capital
Climate change and biodiversity loss.



Security capital
Crime, arms trafficking, homicides, kidnappings, armed conflicts.

Graphic 9
Main areas affected by environmental crime

Source:
Prosegur, 2023

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BIODIVERSITY LOSS



Biodiversity loss is understood as the decrease in the variety of living beings that inhabit an ecosystem. Biodiversity includes living species that provide the Earth's life support system, they make up the ecosystems that provide us with basic goods such as food or clean water, and others as necessary as air or energy. In this regard, population growth and its effects, current consumption patterns and the transformation of natural habitats are leading us to a extinction crisis that scientists are calling the **sixth great extinction**.

The impact of these illicit activities included in this analysis plays a significant role in biodiversity loss. Illegal logging and wildlife crimes are two of the main causes for reducing the habitat availability for the wildlife population and altering the balance of ecosystem; whereby, additionally, lead to the extinction of species and the loss of genetic diversity. These illegal activities lead to **ecological imbalances** in food chains and in the gender ratio, which slows down the reproduction rate of

some vulnerable species. For instance, over the last few years an **increase in taricaya turtle trafficking from South and Central America to China**. In Africa, the male elephant population has been reduced due to the commercial interest for their ivory tusks, thus slowing down the recovery of the elephant population. Meanwhile, the use of cyanide and dynamite when fishing destroys coral reefs that provide habitats for a multitude of aquatic species and provide fish stocks and coastal protection for over 200 million people. In addition to this are the effects of uncontrolled landfills, which are a source of pollution of the air, land, and sea, whereby harming the living conditions for flora, fauna, and communities.

The illegal exploitation of mining resources also contributes to this loss: **the contamination of water, land, and sea, such as deforestation and degradation of the environment**, can generate new threats or increase the risk they pose. Landslides, flooding, and other extreme weather events further enhance the impact, particularly with regards to cases whereby these mining activities modify natural elements, such as the diversion of riverbeds.



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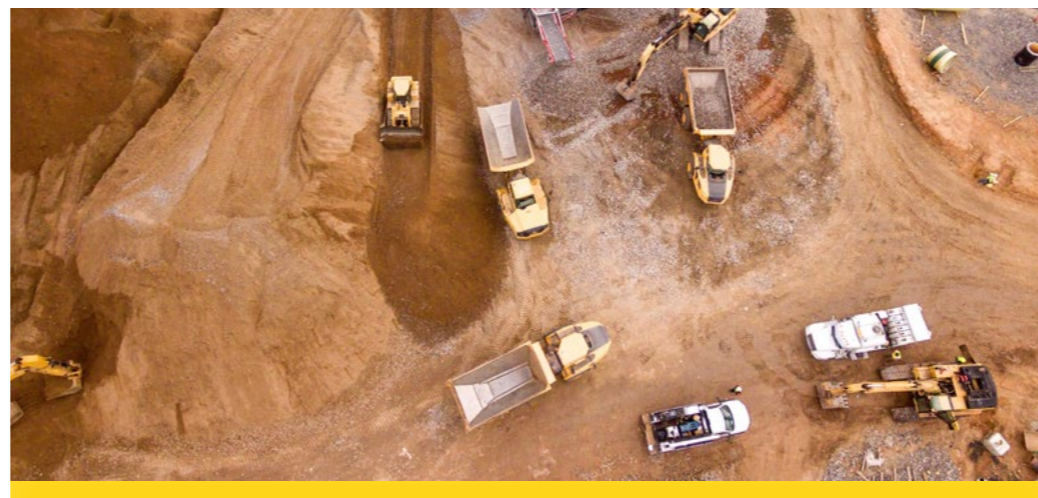


THE IMPACT ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The procedures involved in the four categories of illicit crimes have a **high impact on the socioeconomic order of the local communities** in which they are carried out. These communities may be seen displaced from their environments or subjected to the activities of the perpetrators, who often take advantage of local poverty by generating situations of labor exploitation. In this regard, Susan Shabangu, former South African Minister of Mineral Resources, quantified the impact of illegal mining in South Africa regarding losses amounted to 550 million US dollars. The poor working conditions to which people are subjected, in irregular waste management procedures, are deficient and contribute to the **emergence of social and labor conflicts** that can lead to disruptive protests and thus generating instability for the local community. For instance, Ghana's e-waste landfills employ over 40,000 people to incinerate waste in order to extract the metals they contain, earning little compensation while being exposed to toxic fumes and contaminated food. Additionally, illegal waste management also impacts legitimate companies

by creating an uneven playing field that affects their **competitiveness**, and thus their contribution to the society in which they are located.

In turn, deforestation and biodiversity loss contribute to the destruction of their main economic activities, **affecting both their subsistence** and cultural aspects, and increasing conflicts at both the national and international levels over the role and response of the States to these problems.



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BEYOND BUSINESS ACTIVITY



Any company or organization that fails to comply with environmental regulations can face criminal charges that would seriously affect its operations: from **imposing financial penalties, the suspension of activity for a certain period of time or the impossibility of accessing aid, subsidies, or public programs and in the most serious case, the liquidation of the legal entity.**

However, the economic consequences of these offenses go beyond the effects on the sanctioned companies themselves: **they damage the economy of the communities or countries where they are located, as well as business competitiveness.** This can be explained, or a large part of it, by the link between ecological crimes and other illegal activities such as corruption, money laundering or sexual and labor exploitation, which also involve significant

levels of violence. This situation has a direct impact on economic sectors such as tourism or foreign investments and implies an **increase in spending on security in order to maintain the proper operation** of the areas of the business and industries of the affected area.

The difference in production or extraction costs between companies that follow the law and those that don't, is replicated furthermore in the market prices of these products and services, with the former having to adjust profit margins and even take on losses. Furthermore, in the event these companies are confronted with questions related to the inferior quality or increased costs of primary resources or assuming the costs derived from remedial procedures for contaminated and damaged environments. Therefore, all these factors reduce competition, leading to situations such as the **termination or relocation of their activities. This has a direct impact on the wellbeing of the communities and countries in which they operate** with the decrease in the job markets and the emphasis on systematic issues such as poverty and inequality.

In this regard, special attention should also be paid to the sale of illicit products, which, in addition to the health problems arising from non-compliance with the minimum quality requirements, affect the income of legitimate companies, while also **having an impact on government's tax revenues, which consequently reduces their capacity to invest in improvements in communities and countries.**

Furthermore, multiple studies show that environmental crime **contributes significantly to the labor degradation and exploitation**, favoring inequality in communities and undermining the economic deteriorating the reputation of different economic sectors. This can also lead to the **rejection of licit activity in the area**, which could lead to the emergence of social and labor conflicts, and even vandalism and violence. For instance, in Brazil, more than 400 people were rescued from forced labor of deforestation work in the Amazon region between 2011 and 2020.

Achieving a fairer and more sustainable world requires combining economic benefits with environmental protection.

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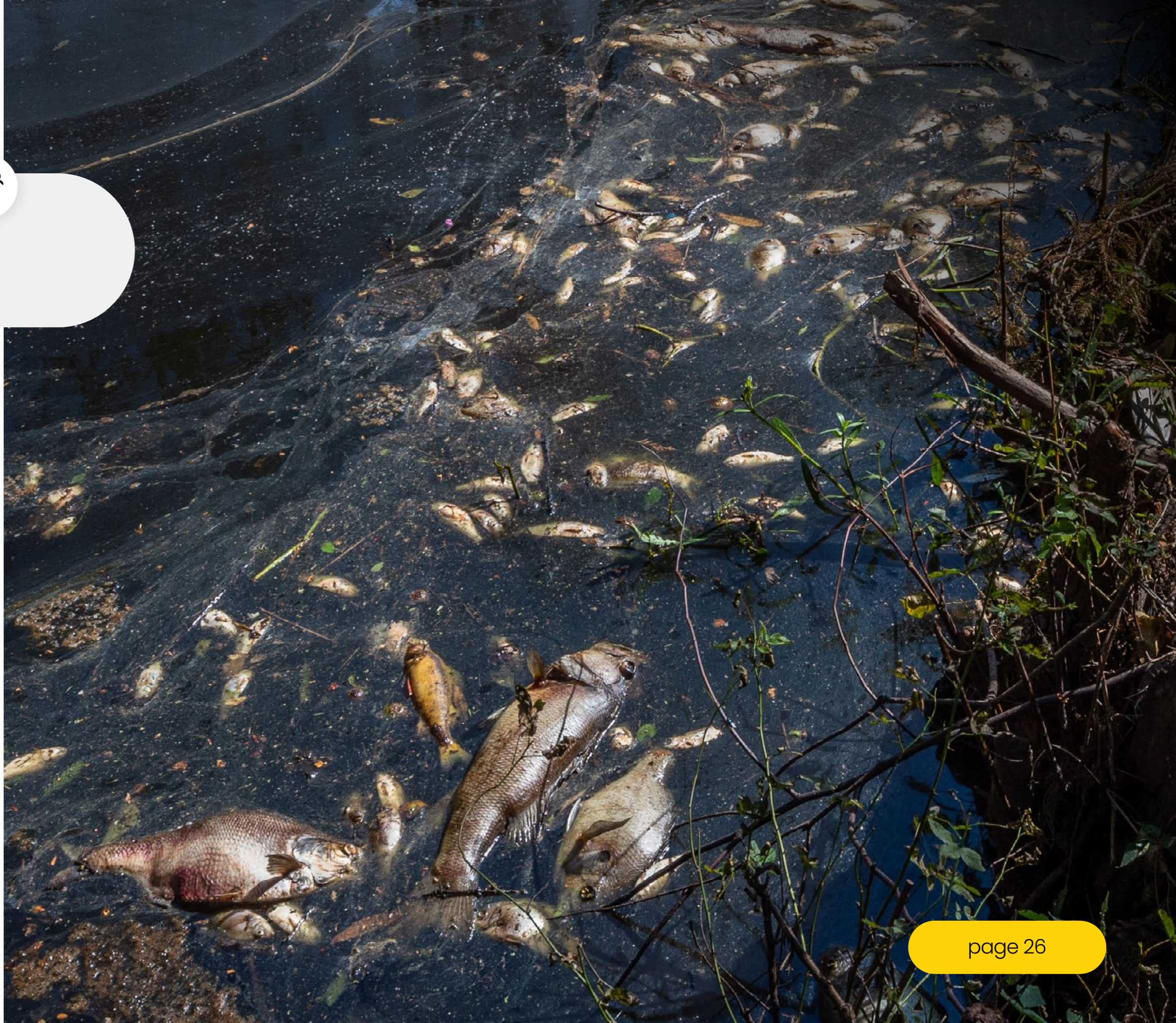


HUMAN HEALTH IN JEOPARDY



Human health is another factor at risk with regards to these illicit activities since indigenous species can introduce viruses or bacteria to which populations may not be resistant. In this regard, the impact on water supplies and other basic supply sources for the population may foster **the emergence of diseases and favor their transmission:** the deterioration of water quality in the Peruvian Amazon region of Madre de Dios resulting from irregular mining activity caused the authorities to declare a state of emergency in several districts due to high mercury levels reported by some residents.

Similarly, in addition to the harmful health effects of the uncontrolled treatment of hazardous waste, particularly on the **nervous, immune, and respiratory systems** and the digestive tract, among others, the focus should be on the informal and inadequate transport of waste, as any accident, with a potential toxic spill, can lead to a possible public health and safety problem.



Illicit activities against the environment.
Hotspots, impacts and security culture.



PROBLEMS WITH SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE



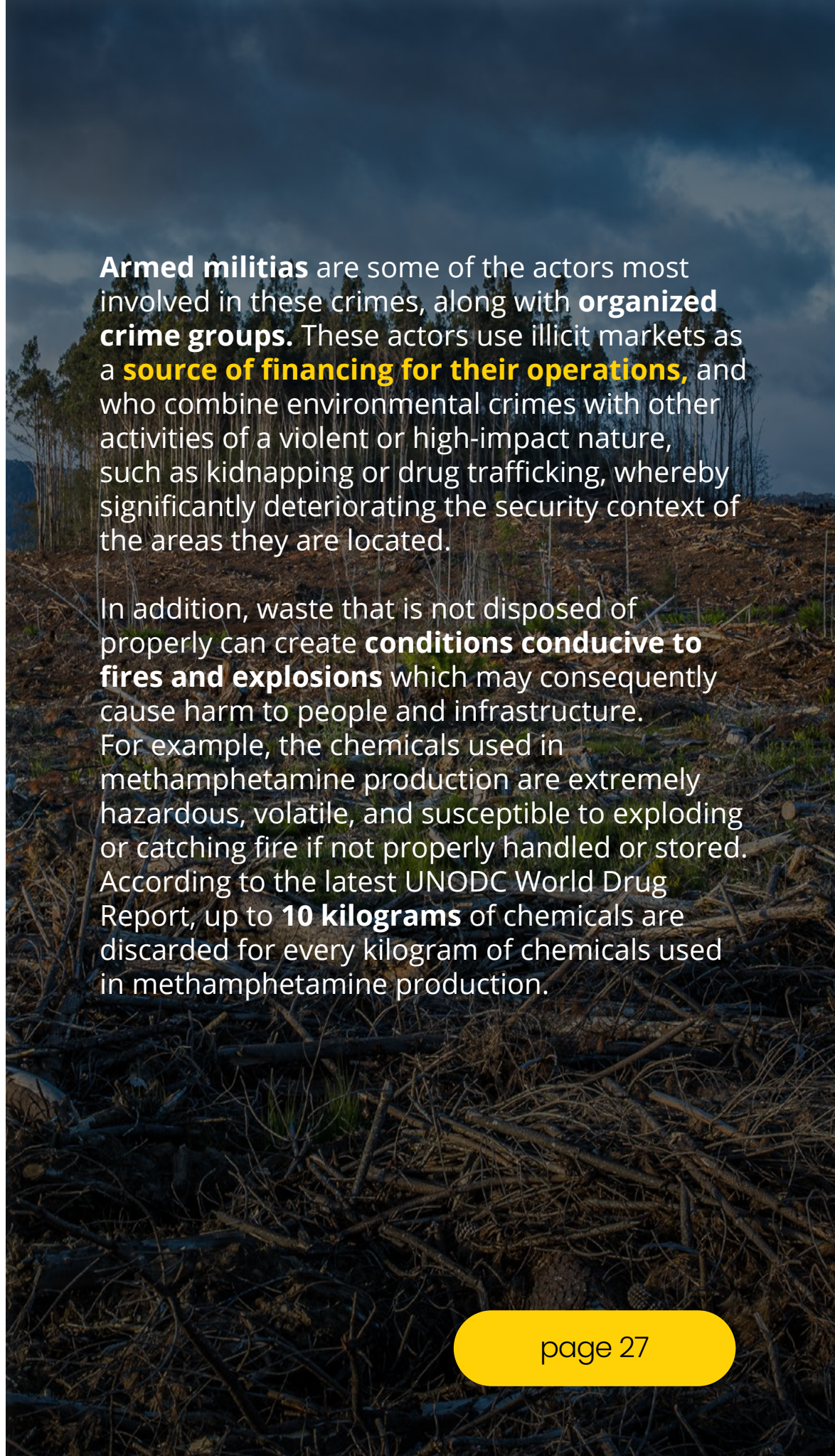
When referring to these illicit activities, we must not forget how they are related to security and governance. Associated with the operation of various actors, from militias to criminal groups, illegal environmental activities also undermine the more traditional security context. This, along with the consequences and economic value of these illicit activities, affects governance and the rule of law in many countries: according to the United Nations Security Council, there is a **link between the proliferation and trafficking of arms** and the illicit trade of natural resources, which consequently fuels the escalation of violence and conflicts in countries such as the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Although there are many cases in which commercial and economic interests come into conflict with the need to protect the environment and the increasing tools at government's disposal to deal with conflicts, we cannot deny that this is a challenge

for governance, especially in countries where political systems are still young or those which present deep-rooted problems. In this respect, most of the crimes covered in this report are associated with or require the necessary participation in corrupt practices, weakening not only institutions, but also **democracy and the rule of law**. In addition, the lack of resources and the country's capabilities contribute to contribute to weakened law enforcement, which in turn facilitate illegal activity

In a security context, there are many places where environmental crime leads to **increased violence and conflict**, as criminal groups may resort to intimidation and violence to control territory and resources. According to the UNODC, **more than 1,000 rangers have been killed in the line of duty in the last decade in Africa alone**.

Similarly, conflicts over access to mineral resources involving the encroachment of Indigenous and rural territories can lead to the forced **displacement of populations**, as well as activities such as human trafficking, contract killings and land trafficking. Threats, aggressions, and assassinations of environmental defenders and activists are also on the rise, especially if they are clearly directed against specific activities or groups. For example, the Colombian Ombudsman's Office recorded 145 murders of social leaders in 2021, including 32 Indigenous leaders and 16 agrarian leaders, closely linked to land conservation.



Armed militias are some of the actors most involved in these crimes, along with **organized crime groups**. These actors use illicit markets as a **source of financing for their operations**, and who combine environmental crimes with other activities of a violent or high-impact nature, such as kidnapping or drug trafficking, whereby significantly deteriorating the security context of the areas they are located.

In addition, waste that is not disposed of properly can create **conditions conducive to fires and explosions** which may consequently cause harm to people and infrastructure. For example, the chemicals used in methamphetamine production are extremely hazardous, volatile, and susceptible to exploding or catching fire if not properly handled or stored. According to the latest UNODC World Drug Report, up to **10 kilograms** of chemicals are discarded for every kilogram of chemicals used in methamphetamine production.

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04

**Environmental responsibility
for a common future**

Illicit activities against the environment.
Hotspots, impacts and security culture.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A COMMON FUTURE



Wildlife and forestry crimes, illegal exploitation of mineral resources or illegal waste and waste management are just a few examples of activities against the environment that do not respect the rule of law and, consequently, increase the difficulty of **mitigating the damage caused by human action on the planet** and accelerates the climate challenges that we will face in the near future, if we are not already doing so.

This challenging future demands constant learning and exploration; only by knowing these actions and their impact will we be able to value the performance of upholding the law, as it is from where the answers to environmental challenges are formulated. The more they are in line with reality, thanks to the **accountability and transparency of all organizations** involved in all types of activities, the better we will be able to identify the most appropriate measures to preserve our planet: encouraging the energy transition to low-emission models or promoting greener, more environmentally friendly solutions are aspects which are systematically ignored by those who act outside the law, but truly relevant for companies and governments.

It is therefore essential that we are aware of our ecological footprint as we assume the responsibility of being the entities that seek to improve the world in a positive and sustainable way. **Commitment to the environment is crucial** to this purpose, and within society, when it is authentic, it is felt from every corner of every office and home, from every employee and consumer, and with every move or decision we make as citizens.

We guarantee the security of people,
businesses, and society as a whole.