



STATEMENT FROM THE FOUR NETWORKS ON ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

3RD OCTOBER 2023

The Four Networks, [IMPEL - European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law](#), [EUFJE - The European Union Forum of Judges for the Environment](#), [ENPE - European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment](#), and [EnviCrimeNet](#), are very pleased with the results of the Networks conference that took place on 28-29 September 2023 in Rome. We are immensely grateful to our hosts, the Italian Carabinieri, for the support from the European Commission, and to all the international organisations from more than 45 countries that were Speakers and active Participants in this event. We thank all our delegates for bringing relevant contributions, sharing their knowledge, and presenting solutions and proposals to move forward our goal of strengthening cooperation and environmental enforcement.



In this conference we aimed to improve our collaboration and the alignment of our enforcement activities.

Addressing the main drivers behind the rise of environmental crime – high profit, low detection rates and low risk of punishment,

To be more successful we need to **focus on prevention rather than reaction**, and **legislation, regulation and resources must promote, ensure and support the actions to increase probability of detecting and successfully prosecuting illicit actions**

The Four Networks selected 5 key topics as crucial to overcoming these obstacles:



1. We need new techniques to prevent and detect environmental offences

➤ We need to detect and act earlier on apprehended breaches

- We need to actively seek opportunities to improve the use the big data analysis (permitting and monitoring/reporting activities); geo-intelligence (drones, satellites); artificial intelligence
- We need to have clearer priority areas and targets and focus our actions to both prevent and respond quickly to problem issues



2. We need administrative and criminal law enforcement to complement each other

- We need the legal resources to respond quickly to breaches of administrative law by applying administrative sanctions, followed by criminal action, where necessary
 - We need effective and available law which allows us to prevent and deter offending and respond using administrative or criminal processes
 - We must use all available tools, including the revision, suspension or revocation of permits, restoration of compliance and remediation of damage
- We must overall uphold the rule of law, including supporting our colleagues in Ukraine



3. We need to make environmental crime unprofitable

➤ We need to remove the profit that leads to environmental offences

- We need to use more preventive measures for confiscation of assets; investigating money laundering; preventing “fake” insolvencies or closure; preventing the use of “paper” front companies' prosecution of both natural and legal persons
 - We must ensure damage remediation and payment of repair costs covering environment, public health, and impact on communities are paid by offenders
 - We need to disrupt and disincentive noncompliance



4. We need to assess, remediate and compensate for the damage incurred

- We need to define clearly terms that give rise to different interpretations and understandings and prevent easy opportunity for arguments in court that such thresholds have not been crossed
 - We need to use clear terminology on the assessment of damage, costs and compensation
- We need to ensure an effective and harmonised application of the law “on the ground” and create a more level playing field between countries and continents



5. We need to measure enforcement results

- We need to understand whether we are heading in the right direction, truly securing a better environment, health and economic and social well-being or if we must take action to correct our path
 - We need to measure enforcement results to ensure we are efficient and effective, using better risk analysis systems, for proportionate and prioritization actions
 - We need standardized validated assessment processes and data
 - We need to be transparent and accountable to retain public confidence in the enforcement regimes