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## South Asia anti-wildlife trade network to be formed

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A two-day workshop of the SAARC secretaries aiming at cooperating for controlling cross-border trade of wildlife among the SAARC countries concluded in Kathmandu, Nepali capital, according to local leading media group's website THT Online Friday.

The workshop attended by representatives from the ministries of environment and forest of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries began here on Thursday.

"The workshop will develop a SAARC level network to curb the cross-border poaching and trading in wildlife, which is increasing at an alarming rate in the region," said Roland Melisch, chairman of Traffic International.

"Cooperation among the neighboring states is always a welcome step. A joint commitment will make a difference," he said while addressing the workshop.

Dr. Arvind Boaz, director general of South Asian Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP) said that the SAARC countries would explore joint efforts to curb smuggling of wildlife from the area.

"The workshop will also try and find out ways to regulate trade in wildlife," he said.

The SACEP is an inter-governmental organization established in 1982 by the South Asian countries' governments to promote and support protection, management and enhancement of the environment in the region.

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Tirtha Raj Sharma, secretary at the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, said Nepal will be glad to join hands with the international community to save the wildlife from illegal traders.

A long and continued effort is necessary to control the multi-tiered network of wildlife traders, said Anil Manandhar, representative of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal.

Representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka briefed the participants on the present status of wildlife, illegal trade and the efforts by their respective governments to control them.

Tigers, rhinos, musk deer, leopards and bears are currently under attack of the poachers in Nepal, said Dr. Narendra MB Pradhan, planning officer at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation of Nepal.

The two-day workshop is jointly organized by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Nepal, SACEP, Traffic International and WWF-Nepal.

*Source: Xinhua*