

**Statement of Chairwoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Oversight Hearing on the Impacts that U.S. Consumer
Demand is having on the Illegal and Unsustainable
Trade of Wildlife Products and Ongoing and Proposed
Efforts to Increase Public Awareness about these
Impacts.**

**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
Tuesday, September 16, 2008**

The Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans meets this morning to hear testimony on the impacts that U.S. consumer demand is having on the illegal and unsustainable trade of wildlife products and ongoing and proposed efforts to increase public awareness about these impacts.

On March 5th, 2008 the Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing entitled “Poaching American Security: Impacts of Illegal Wildlife Trade.” During this hearing we heard about the serious consequences of the global illegal wildlife trade, including the threats to our national security, to human health, and to biodiversity.

The Committee's investigation also revealed that the U.S. is largely driving this trade, with the value of wildlife imports to the U.S. more than doubling over the past 8 years.

Yet, while the U.S. consumer is, in many cases, unwittingly fueling the illegal and unsustainable trade of wildlife and wildlife products, the U.S. strategy to educate consumers is woefully lacking at the Federal level and is largely left to private and non-profit organizations. Without awareness and education, American consumers will continue to make uninformed decisions that contribute to this growing problem.

Those few governmental, private, and non-governmental organizations that have empowered consumers to make choices that also promote the conservation of wildlife stand out. Through advertising, marketing, and education, these groups have started to address the illegal and

unsustainable trade of wildlife and wildlife products.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses, whose testimonies will highlight those pioneering initiatives to build public awareness about this illegal trade. I also look forward to hearing suggestions for possible Congressional action that may expand our national education efforts to address this growing problem.