

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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STATUS REPORT: ILLEGAL KILLING OF RHINOCEROS IN SOUTH AFRICA
AND THE SUBSEQUENT ILLEGAL TRADE IN RHINO HORN

The attached document has been submitted by South Africa in relation to agenda item 45 on *Rhinoceroses*.^{*}

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environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REPORT TO THE 61ST STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) – AUGUST 2011

STATUS REPORT: ILLEGAL KILLING OF RHINOCEROS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE SUBSEQUENT ILLEGAL TRADE IN RHINO HORN

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The latest statistics from the IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group indicates that the White rhino population in South Africa is increasing and that the current levels of poaching in South Africa are not endangering the South African White rhino population as yet. South Africa currently has a population of approximately 18,780 White Rhino and 1,906 Black Rhino. The net annual growth rate of the White rhino population in South Africa is 6.6% (M.Knight *in litt*, 2009).
- 1.2 From 1 January 2011 to 15 June 2011 a total of 174 rhino have been illegally killed in South Africa. This figure follows on a figure of 333 animals recorded as illegally killed in 2010. Of the 174 animals recorded as illegally killed this year, 121 have been poached in the KNP. A total of 122 suspected rhino poachers have been arrested in South Africa since January 2011. Of the 122 arrested suspects, 60 have been arrested in the Kruger National Park which is the protected area that has suffered the most losses.

2. INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS ILLEGAL KILLING OF RHINOS

- 2.1 The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) is aware that only a well coordinated effort by all law enforcement agencies in South Africa will make an impact on the illegal killing of the rhinos and therefore the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs entered into negotiations on cooperation with the South African Police Service (SAPS), the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), South African National Parks (SANParks), provincial conservation agencies and the LeadSA private initiative, which the later enables ordinary citizens to contribute to the anti-rhino poaching campaign.
- 2.2 The SAPS has decided to declare the illegal killing of rhino's and the illegal trade in rhino horn as a priority crime and on request from the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, elevated this to the National Joints Security Committee (NATJOINTS) in South Africa. This resulted in a national project, called "Operation Rhino", being approved and a NATJOINTS Priority Committee to manage the project, being established and mandated to handle all rhino related investigations and cases. The agencies participating in the joint committee includes the SAPS, SANDF, National Intelligence Agency, SA Civil Aviation Authority, DEA, SANParks, South Africa Veterinary Council, the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, the Department of Health (Medicines Control) and all other relevant co-opted stakeholders.
- 2.3 Apart from the collaboration with other government institutions, the DEA implemented various steps to address the illegal killing of rhinoceros and the subsequent trade in illegally obtained rhinoceros horns. These include:

- The publication in the government gazette and the implementation of a national moratorium on the sale of individual rhinoceros horns and any derivatives or products within South Africa on 13 February 2009 to prevent that legally obtained horns end up in the illegal trade;
- The publication in the government gazette and the implementation of national norms and standards for the marking of rhinoceros horn and the hunting of white rhinoceros for trophy hunting purposes on 20 July 2009 to further regulate marking and hunting of rhinoceros;
- The establishment of a national, multi-departmental biodiversity investigators forum in March 2009. This Forum coordinates and acts as a contact point where all biodiversity related law enforcement information could be collected, accessed, distributed and tasked to specific subgroups of the Forum. Provincial conservation and South African National Parks investigators and police officers use the Forum to discuss, share and exchange information on wildlife related law enforcement organized crime incidents such as the increased illegal killing of rhinoceros;
- South Africa participated in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Rhinoceros and Enforcement Task Force in 2009 and the Rhinoceros and Elephant Task Force in 2011 to discuss problems and possible solutions to the increase in illegal killing in rhinoceros and elephants and the subsequent illegal trade in the horn and ivory;
- DEA has established a Directorate: Biodiversity Enforcement and Compliance to coordinate and investigate biodiversity related crimes on a national basis;
- The National CITES Regulations were published in the government gazette in March 2010 for implementation;
- A Rhino Summit was held in October 2010, as requested by the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, to discuss the upsurge in the illegal killing of rhinoceros in South Africa, to augment and endorse the current initiatives against rhino poaching and afford stakeholders an opportunity to reflect on the current interventions and harness further political and broader stakeholder commitment.
- A National Strategy for the Safety and Security of Rhinoceros Populations and Horn Stocks in South Africa was approved and implemented;
- The establishment of an interim National Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit (NWCURU) within DEA was announced at the Minister's Rhino Summit held in October 2010. The Unit's primary aim is to ensure that all conservation agencies in South Africa respond to the current state of wildlife crimes and more specifically the upsurge of rhinoceros poaching and smuggling of rhinoceros horn. The Unit works in close cooperation with the SAPS, which is ultimately responsible for policing of organized crime in South Africa and the Joint security structures as explained above. The Unit is being coordinated by the head of SANParks's Environmental Crime Investigation Unit on behalf of the DEA
- An official South African delegation visited Vietnam in September 2010 to meet with Vietnamese officials regarding the challenges South Africa are facing with the involvement of Vietnam nationals in illegal rhino horn and rhino hunting activities and to obtain a better understanding of the consumer dynamics in Vietnam. This visit was possible due to funding from the United States Government and TRAFFIC International as discussed at CITES CoP15. As part of the initiative Vietnamese officials will visit South Africa in September 2011 to discuss progress made since their first meeting and problems still encountered. The Deputy President of the 2 countries agreed on the development of an MoU.
- The SANDF has deployed troops along the eastern boundary of the Kruger National Park (KNP) as part of their mandate to control the international borderline of South Africa and
- SANParks, an entity of the DEA, has implemented the following in the KNP,:
 - Deployment of 58 new field rangers into poaching "hot spots" within the KNP;
 - Radio communications facilities and equipment, within the KNP, is being upgraded to include the latest in digital technology;

- Ranger section specific safety and security plans which guide the identification and countering of all poaching threats in parks;
- Change in condition of services for field rangers to facilitate adequate deployments over weekends and public holidays;
- Feasibility study – deployment of tracker dogs in anti-poaching and follow-up operations;
- Acquisition of 19 motorbikes to assist in patrolling and follow-up actions. 7 bikes received to date;
- Acquisition of new “night vision” equipment to boost existing equipment for night deployments;
- Purchase of an ultra-light Bantam aircraft which will boost the existing ultra-light aircraft fleet to 2, for anti-poaching operations in the KNP;
- Establishment of effective joint liaison and cross border operational mechanisms with Mozambique to support cross border anti-poaching operations into Mozambique and
- Acquisition of a new SANParks intelligence / investigation management system, MEMEX to assist with the capture, storage and analysis of environmental crime related information.

- 2.4 The National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa is working closely with everyone involved in the cases of illegal killing of rhinos and the illegal trade in rhino horn and the courts have imposed harsh sentences in a bid to deter offenders. The alarming rate of rhinos killed in South Africa over the last two years has prompted the National Director of Public Prosecutions to assign twenty prosecutors specifically to rhino cases. These prosecutors are doing excellent work in securing convictions and are working tirelessly with law enforcement agencies to ensure that rhino poachers are successfully prosecuted.
- 2.5 South Africa is committed to continue fighting the illegal killing of its rhinoceros populations and will leave no stone unturned in the investigation and prosecution of all cases of illegal killing of rhinoceros and the illegal trade in rhino horn. However, South Africa needs the cooperation of importing and consumer countries to assist in the investigation and prosecution of illegally traded rhino horn cases, ensuring that legally imported rhino hunting trophies are not being sold or donated to someone else once imported and that legally obtained trophies are only imported by the hunter's themselves. Exchange of information on possible illegal activities and other intelligence is of utmost importance for effective compliance monitoring and enforcement where needed.