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

PROPOSAL FOR TRANSFER FROM APPENDIX I TO II

1. PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the South African population of the southern white rhinoceros, *Ceratotherium simum simum*, as contained in Appendix I to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, be deleted therefrom and transferred to Appendix II in accordance with the provision of Article XI.

2. PROPONENTS

The Republic of South Africa.

3. TAXONOMY

CLASS	:	Mammalia
ORDER	:	Perissodactyla
FAMILY	:	Rhinocerotidae
SPECIES	:	*Ceratotherium simum simum*
COMMON NAME	:	Southern white or square-lipped rhinoceros

4. BACKGROUND

The white rhinoceros was included in Appendix I during the first meeting of the Parties in 1976. As such, transfer from Appendix I to II can be proposed without application of the Berne Criteria for Transfer (Resolution Conf. 2.23) which requires new evidence to transcend that used for Appendix I listing.

This motivation therefore does not refer to the original motivation for listing, but carefully reviews the status of the species and presents evidence which leads to the conclusion that :

(i) the species would not be eligible for retention in Appendix I under the additional criteria adopted at that meeting (Resolution Conf. 1.1) and therefore should be be transferred to Appendix II; and

(ii) the additional criteria adopted by the Parties in Resolution Conf. 5.21 (Buenos Aires 1985) for transfer from Appendix I to II are met.

Article II of the Convention sets forth the following among its fundamental principles:

(i) Appendix I shall include all species threatened with extinction which are, or may be affected by trade. To qualify for inclusion, a species must be currently threatened with extinction.

(ii) Appendix II shall include

- all species which although not necessarily now threatened with extinction may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival; and

- other species which must be subject to regulation in order that trade in in specimens of certain species referred to in the above sub-paragraph may be brought under effective control.

5. CONSERVATION STATUS AND TRENDS

To qualify for Appendix I listing a species must be currently threatened with extinction. The information presented below demonstrates that this is not the case.

Distribution

The southern white rhinoceros was formerly widespread throughout southern Africa, but by the early 1900's only the small population in the Umfolozi area of Zululand remained.

Numbers increased rapidly under protection, so that by 1961 there were sufficient numbers to translocate to new areas (see Population size and trend). In this way, the white rhinoceros has been re-established in more than 20 conservation areas and on numerous private properties throughout its former range in South Africa, as well as elsewhere in Africa and in zoos and other institutions throughout the world.

Population size

The only southern white rhinos left in Africa in 1900 were small relict populations in Zululand, Natal, and on the Southern Rhodesian - Mozambique border. The latter died out, leaving the 10 or so survivors afforded protection in the Umfolozi Game Reserve in South Africa.

Under protection, numbers increased to about 20 by 1920, 200 by 1933 and close to 1000 by 1961 (Owen-Smith 1973) when translocations to other areas began. The South African population grew to 3800 by 1984 and stands at nearly [redacted] today distributed between State-controlled conservation areas and private land. The largest populations are in the Hluhluwe and Umfolozi Game Reserves complex (2000) and the Kruger National Park (1350).

Large numbers have been relocated to zoos and safari parks throughout the world, and to other countries in the region. The population in the wild outside South Africa was estimated at 400 in 1987 (AERSG 1987), although these populations have probably since declined due to poaching.

The northern sub-species *Ceratotherium simum cottoni* is represented by about 26 individuals in the wild in Garamba National Park, Zaire.

Conservation status

The southern white rhinoceros is not currently listed in any of the threatened categories within either the IUCN or South African Red Data Book. Formerly the species had been granted Class A protection by the IUCN, but this was withdrawn in 1965 due to the upward population trend and effective management. Numbers and ranges have increased markedly in the 25 years since then.

Habitat

Very substantial tracts of land in South Africa under game management, within both the public and private sectors, are available for white rhinoceros populations, so their expansion is not limited by land availability. Habitat destruction is, therefore, not a relevant consideration.

6. EXPLOITATION

The additional criteria for transfer from Appendix I to II (Resolution Conf. 5.21) require positive evidence that

(a) the animal can withstand the exploitation resulting from the removal of protection (protection in this context refers to that afforded by the voluntary trade bans entered into by signatories to CITES), and

(b) transfer will not lead to reduction in controls in other species.

It is relevant to record here that one of the three main objectives of the World Conservation Strategy is "to ensure the sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems".

Illegal trade

As signatories to CITES, South Africa has applied the ban on trade in rhinoceros products on the assumption that the demand for such products would disappear and poaching would cease.

The penalty for poaching of, or illegal trade in, the white rhinoceros was raised within Natal to R100 000 or 10 years imprisonment in early 1991, which confers the same legal protection as on the black rhinoceros. Similar legislation is already in force, or is currently (April 1991) being promulgated, throughout the rest of South Africa.

While poaching has been effectively controlled in South Africa through appropriate anti-poaching and other security programmes, and the rhinoceros populations (both black and white) have continued to flourish, this is not the case elsewhere. On the African and global scales, poaching activities and illegal trade have continued on a large scale. On the African continent, this has resulted in black rhino numbers falling from 65000 in 1970 to about 3000 today, and the small numbers of white rhinos north of the Limpopo river have been similarly affected.

The strategy of banning all international trade in rhinoceros products has therefore failed to provide any significant protection to rhinoceros populations in the wild and should be discarded as a viable conservation measure. The conclusion drawn is that the removal of CITES protection will not result in an increased level of undesirable or illegal exploitation of the southern white rhinoceros, in fact the reverse is expected (see Conservation benefits of trade). This statement also applies to the small population of the northern white rhinoceros in Garamba National Park, which is expanding as a result of sound management and in spite of existing poaching pressures, and the black rhinoceros populations throughout Africa which would still be subject to Appendix I restrictions.

Current legal exploitation

South Africa has adhered to the provisions of the Convention and accordingly trade in rhinoceroses and their products has been subject to particularly strict regulation and is authorised in exceptional circumstances only.

Trophy hunting under permits issued by conservation authorities has been undertaken both on private properties since the early 1970's and on State land, e.g. Pilanesberg National Park, Bophuthatswana, and the Mkuzi Controlled Hunting Area in Natal.

Utilisation, whether through trophy hunting or game viewing, confers a real value on the resources and, when properly controlled, actively encourages conservation (t'Sas-Rolfes 1990). A recent survey by Buys (1988) indicated not only that there were more than 800 white rhinos on private land in South Africa, but that the majority of the populations were subjected to some form of legal utilisation.

Potential controlled utilisation

In addition to the above, the potential controlled utilisation of the white rhinoceros could include :

- Ranching for horn. This would involve periodic capture and removal of excess horn growth. Such management would render the animals far less attractive to poachers, and therefore would enhance their conservation.

- Products from natural mortalities. Horn, skin, toenails and a variety of other products would become available.

- Slaughter for products. This would be controlled through licences or permits issued by nature conservation authorities, and as such, would be strictly controlled to avoid abuse. Seriously injured, sick or post-reproductive animals would be involved. A wide range of rhino products would result.

By far the majority of products would be derived from live animals or natural mortalities, and therefore would not adversely affect the growth of populations.

The collection and sale of rhino products from such programmes would provide the incentives to the private landowner to increase his rhino holdings and improve security, i.e. to protect his resources once the value to the owner (rather than the illegal operator) increases.

Potential commercial trade

The market is fairly evenly split between North Yemen, where handles for ceremonial daggers are furnished from horn, and countries in eastern Asia which incorporate a variety of rhino products in traditional Chinese medicines. This market was estimated at about 2,5 tons in the early 1980's. Rhino products are also used as muti (traditional medicine) in Africa.

Trade would be effectively regulated to ensure that horn or other rhinoceros products from unapproved sources could not be laundered through the legal trade. This would be effected through a strictly controlled quota and marketing system as described below.

Quotas

Annual quotas based on the sizes of the populations being exploited would be submitted for CITES approval.

The 1992 quota would be set at 500 kg of horn, but would also include those other products (skin, toenails, etc) that would become available through the natural mortality of 100 rhinos.

This quota is extremely conservative and could easily be met through current stockpiles (horns) or the recovery of a proportion of the products from natural mortalities which would be estimated as at least 150 p.a. (ecological longevity 30 years on population of 4500). Also, the expected increase in any one year, over and above natural mortalities, amounts to an additional 210 rhinos (calculated as 50% of the maximum rate of increase of 9.5% p.a. recorded by Owen-Smith (1973) in Umfolozi Game Reserve, Natal).

Marketing System

The rhinoceros products would be processed in South Africa to produce traditional medicines and/or dagger handles, sold to approved buyers and the consignments sealed and sent overseas in bondage. Production would be limited to the approved quota levels, while regular testing of samples would ensure that products from other species (e.g. black rhinoceros) or unapproved areas (based on

isotopic analysis) were detected.

The control and marketing aspects would be handled by the Natal Parks Board, an approved CITES management authority, at a control facility on behalf of all suppliers of the rhinoceros products. A large pharmaceutical company has already indicated a willingness to beneficiate the product for marketing overseas.

Conservation benefits of trade

Revenue accrued from the sale of rhinoceros products will be available to maintain or improve the conservation management programmes on which the various rhinoceros species depend. Detailed research and monitoring programmes are required to ensure sustained population growth (Brooks 1989), but currently the most critical aspect is the security of populations. Law enforcement, including anti-poaching and intelligence activities, is extremely expensive; and is unlikely, on its own, to succeed in the long term without the whole-hearted support of the local communities.

The Natal parks Board has already undertaken to use the funds obtained from selling rhinoceros products for two purposes only, namely for investment in a Conservation Trust to finance priority conservation projects and for neighbourhood programmes. The latter involves identifying the development needs of the underprivileged communities surrounding game reserves; and to provide material support following discussion and agreement with local leaders. Such benefits will encourage the local people to support wildlife conservation and the protection of rhinoceros populations in particular, and this support is considered critical to the long-term survival of the species in the region.

Legalised trade will have additional benefits for rhinoceros conservation. It is well established that the legalisation of trade results in improved intelligence, as the legal entrepeneur informs on black market activities, and that a dependable supply of products depresses black market prices. In addition, private land-owners will be encouraged to invest in rhinoceros populations and protect them as utilisable, economic assets.

The Natal Parks Board is deeply concerned about the implications of leaving rhinoceros products to rot on the ground or in storage vaults, when legal utilisation could help prevent the continued slaughter of this magnificent animal and its close relatives in other parts of its range.

7. CONTROLS ON SIMILAR SPECIES

That transfer of the southern white rhinoceros from Appendix I to II will not lead to reduction in controls in other species (Resolution Conf. 5.21) is justified as follows :

- the trade ban has not afforded protection to wild populations (see Illegal trade) of either the white or black rhinoceros;

- the controlled marketing and processing in situ based on authorised supplies will prevent laundering of illegal products. Testing of samples for species and area will provide additional safeguards (see Potential commercial trade).

8. SUMMARY

This document indicates that the transfer of the southern white rhinoceros *Ceratotherium simum simum* from Appendix I to II is justified in terms of all the relevant criteria laid down by CITES, namely :

* Species is not threatened with extinction and therefore does not qualify for Appendix I (Res. Conf. 1.1). The southern white rhinoceros is not listed in the IUCN Red Data Book, and numbers have increased consistently since being delisted in 1965.

* Species can withstand exploitation for trade (Res. Conf. 5.21). Exploitation will be largely non-consumptive in that most of the products will be available from live animals (horn) or natural mortalities. Species has been subject to trophy hunting in South Africa for almost two decades with no deleterious effects.

* Quota system would not endanger wild population (Res. Conf. 5.21). Quota would be based on accurate information on population sizes and trends, and would be set so as not to allow overall population decline.

* Exporting State can effectively regulate trade and this would not lead to reduced CITES controls on other species (Res. Conf. 5.21). Handling and manufacture in South Africa will be strictly controlled by the Natal Parks Board through a single outlet to ensure that only products from approved sources are used.

* State has met reporting requirements to date, and trade data will continue to be made available. South Africa has met these conditions to date, and will continue to do so.

In addition there is strong evidence that controlled, legal trade in white rhinoceros products will result in significant conservation benefits to the species.

9. REFERENCES

AERSG. 1987. Tabulated population estimates produced at African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group meeting, Nairobi, 17 - 20 May 1987.

Brooks, P.M. 1989. Conservation plan for black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis* in South Africa, the TBVC States, and SWA/Namibia. Unpubl. report : 28 pp.

Buys, D. 1988. A summary of the introduction of white rhino onto private land in the Republic of South Africa. Unpubl. report to NPB : 11 pp.

Owen-Smith, N. 1973. The behavioural ecology of the white rhinoceros. Ph D. thesis, Univ. of Wisconsin, USA.

t'Sas-Rolfes. 1990. Privatising the rhino industry. Dissertation for B. Comm. Hons, Univ. Witwatersrand, RSA.

PMB/lh
Lyn/whiterhi
91:04:17