



## REPORT ON RHINOCEROSSES 2022 - 2023 VIET NAM

Regarding implementation of the Decision on Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae spp.)  
adopted at the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting the Conference of the Parties

*Ha Noi, 26 December 2023*

### BASIS

At the CoP19 of CITES, the Conference of Parties retained Decision 18.116 and adopted Decisions 19.115, 19.116, 19.118 on Rhinoceroses. These decisions request parties in general, and Viet Nam in particular, to implement activities regarding to rhinoceros sample collection, exchange and forensic analysis; furthermore, request Viet Nam to strengthen joint operation and information exchange with other parties.

At the request of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), the Conference of Parties urges parties to implement a wide range of activities in relation to the trade in rhinoceros parts and derivatives.

Viet Nam CITES Management Authority, on the basis the above requests, has formally consulted relevant government agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations to collect data and information to develop such report. Viet Nam CITES MA, based on collected data, formed a collective analysis and report which comprise information from *state authorities as Ministry of the Viet Nam Border Guards, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Finance; and other NGOs.*

The report is constituted by five sections in response to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19) and related decisions, including: (1) Legislation, (2) Enforcement control, (3) Sample collection and Forensic Analysis, (4) Demand reduction and awareness raising, (5) International Operations, investigation and information exchange.

### CONTENTS

#### 1. Legislation

- In 2019, the government Decree 06/2019/ND-CP on the Management of Endangered, precious, rare wild fauna and flora, and the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of wild fauna and flora, was enacted with details in management scheme, harvest, breeding and artificial propagation, marking, permit and certificates, and CITES implementation in general.
- In 2021, the government Decree 84/2021/ND-CP on amendments of Decree 06/2019/ND-CP was enacted to address relevant needs for update of domestic regulations related to CITES.
- In 2023, the Viet Nam MA, under Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, is at final stages to finalize a draft of a new government Decree to replace aforementioned Decrees. This



draft provides additional regulations and amendments on terminology, management of wild fauna and flora, implementation of CITES, permits and certificates to be adaptive to changes and current practices. The draft clearly states the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance to provide and report annual information on national CITES species storage, to facilitate the reporting to CITES under its provision.

- Circular 26/2022/TT-BNNPTNT on management, traceability of forest products was enacted to replace the previous Circular. This circular reinforces strengthen the requirements in legal origin for forest wildlife species, inclusive of wild, bred, propagated species, purported for both import and export activities. The circular also strengthens concrete provision on species marking.

- Plan on “Strengthening the prevention and combat biodiversity crimes to 2030, with a vision toward 2050”

## 2. Enforcement control

Viet Nam is currently identified as the third most affected party by illegal trade in rhinoceros, placed in Category A – most affected by illegal trade in ivory. Wildlife trafficking in general, illegal trade of rhinoceros and ivory specimens has turned into among the most lucrative forms of transnational organized crime, with increasingly complex modus operandi and growing scope in space and size. The supply chains are often found transnational, whereas law enforcement in transit countries plays a crucial part in the hard work combating the crime. National enforcement efforts though greatly achieved, are often overshadowed by the severity of the crimes and large record in confiscated specimen’s volume.

*\* At the time submission of this interim report, the Viet Nam CITES MA is in the process to collect information and data from state authorities as Customs, Environment Polices, Border Force control for enforcement control efforts. The final and comprehensive version of the report will be ready for submission within December 2023. The current data on seizures and prosecution progress is recorded and provided by Environmental Investigation Agency and Education for Nature Viet Nam.*

### 2.1. Seizure data

The seizure data in illegal traded of rhinoceros is presented in detail in Annex 1. The data show 13 cases from 2021 – 2023, with a total of 24 suspects arrested. Among those, 05/13 cases are under investigation, while the rest has been resolved. The largest account in weight of rhino horn was 9.3 kg by the seizure made at an international airport in Ha Noi. 02 subjects of the cases received criminal penalties by the court for 8-year and 7-year imprisonment respectively, recorded as the most severe punishment in the period. At another cases, 03 subjects considered important personnel in the criminal network received 30-month to 42-month imprisonment.



Online trade and E-commerce have been acting as emerging trade platforms with 03 seizures made associated with the sales over Internet or social media. The work in tracking cyber criminals is currently confronting difficulties in resources and techniques.

Overall, the enforcement efforts by Viet Nam should be recognized and applauded, although challenges remain given the lack of resources, information exchange from foreign countries, international support and facilitation.

Please kindly find the **Annex 1** for details of seizure data.

## ***2.2. Capacity development for law enforcement force***

Under the project Saving Threatened Wildlife, five training workshops have taken place for multi stakeholder, including 24 enforcement officers in capacity development in combating wildlife trade, law enforcement and demand reduction.

## **3. Samples collection and forensic analysis**

Viet Nam is currently in the process of implementing our MoU with South Africa, with a joint action to exchange rhinoceros samples where it is relevant. During the period 2022 – October 2023, there is no record of seizures in rhinoceros specimen originated from South Africa, therefore, no exchange of samples was happened.

## **4. Demand reduction and community awareness**

### ***4.1. Project “Saving Species” (2017 – 2021)<sup>1</sup>***

From 2017 – 2021, USAID had been technically and financial supporting project “Saving Species” with a component on Demand Reduction, carried out by Viet Nam CITES MA in partnering with TRAFFIC. The project had conducted several market research and social research on demand for rhino, elephant and pangolin products. The project launched a campaign on legal awareness raising to spread information on severe punishments for wildlife crimes. It is estimated that the messages reached millions of people via billboard at public sites (airports, commercial buildings, tourism destinations) and frequent media coverage. In 2020, the project launched a Social behavior change communication activities campaign to address motivations of rhino buyers and users related to “functional benefits”. The campaign used media and TV for broadcasting message. A sitcom series reached around 300,000 views per episode, while a key video reached one million view on YouTube. In additional, the project worked with traditional medication association to develop manuals on herbs replacing rhino horns and pangolin scales and encouraged practitioners in the industry to not use illegal wildlife products. On the other hands, the “Karma campaign” aimed at “emotional benefits” of elephant and pangolin products, addressed spiritual perceptions of people to show wealth and power. Two key videos of this campaign reached 2 million views on YouTube, engaged 74,000 people. Regard to tourism sector, the project organized 02 training course on

---

<sup>1</sup> USAID Saving Species Final report 2021



responsibility of the tourism industry, involving the participation of 200 tour guides and staffs. After these training, 32 companies (hotels, tourism ships) displayed their messages on wildlife protection at their areas. The project also cooperated with Viet Nam Association of E-commerce association to implement a range of activities to their 5,000 members and the e-commerce community on anti-wildlife trafficking in the online environment. Lastly, Saving Species worked with Viet Nam Association of National Parks and Protected Areas to develop manuals on wildlife protection communication and 03 training courses to their community and tourists. A set of communication materials named “Forest Warrior” was distributed for children at the national parks, protected areas. The events attracted estimated 169,700 people including local community, students and tourists.

#### **4.2. Project “*Saving Threatened Wildlife*” (2022 – date)<sup>2</sup>**

Project STW is the second phase of “Saving Species”, funded by USAID, implemented by Management Board for Forestry Projects in partnering with TRAFFIC, WWF. The project is working closely with stakeholders to execute a comprehensive activity plan focusing on behavior change for traditional medicine practitioners, domestic and international tourists, users of illegal traded wild product in general. Partners of the program includes the Central Propaganda Department, Central Oriental Traditional Medicine Association, National Institute of Medicinal Materials, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Delivery services, E-commerce Association, Automobile Transportation Association, tourism related agencies, state agencies, international organizations and press agencies.

A series of awareness raising and demand reduction in illegal traded wild products have taken place across the country, in details:

- The cycle event on 11/3/2023 in Ban Me Thuot city, co-hosted by the Dak Lak Province Committee of the Fatherland Front, Regional IV Forest Protection Department, Yokdon National Park with more than 100 people participated.
- The cycle race on 12/8/2023 at Yokdon National Park, in response to the World Elephant Day, with the participation of more than 160 bicycle racer.
- Exhibition booth at Ha Long Food Festival 2023 – one of the international tourist hub.

#### **4.3. Project “*Behavior Change and Demand reduction of Rhino horn in Traditional Medicine in Viet Nam*” and Project “*Protect the Rhinos*”**

The projects are implemented by TRAFFIC, funded by WWF Germany, with the aim to eliminate prescription of medicine using rhino horn and illegal traded products as ingredients in traditional medicine practice, toward substituted sustainable, safe and legal ingredients.

---

<sup>2</sup> TRAFFIC Viet Nam report to Viet Nam CITES MA on October 2023



#### **4.4. Project “Rhino horn Demand Reduction campaign” by Humane Society International**

<sup>3</sup>

Within the scope of the campaign, Humane Society International ran our 15-second commercial “[When I Grow Up](#)” on all Vietnam Airlines (VNA) flights from January to August 2022. During this period, the commercial aired on 71,584 flights and reached more than 5 million passengers. In addition, the 60-second commercial version was also posted on our HSI/Vietnam Facebook page from April 2022 to June 2023. In 2022, the commercial reached almost 4 million Facebook users in our target demographic, and in 2023, it reached more than 10 million. HSI continues to join hands with other organizations to urge the Vietnamese public to stop consuming rhino horn.

#### **5. Joint-operations, investigations and information exchange**

During recent years, the international community witnessed the success in the continuous series of enforcement Operations initiated by the Customs, facilitated by UNODC, WCO and INTERPOL. Hundreds of smuggling cases and suspects are seized within the scope of the operations. While applauding the success of these ground-breaking enforcement campaigns, Viet Nam authorities commit to keep the progress going by planning for the next phases.

##### **5.1. Operation Mekong Dragon <sup>4</sup>**

Operation Mekong Dragon is an international operation that focuses on strengthening enforcement, seizures of transnational criminals and confiscation in smuggling and transporting of wild animals and plants, narcotics, and other transboundary crimes. Through the last four phases from 2018 – 2022, the Operation has achieved great success in terms of the number of participants and the number of seizures; and created a certain buzz about coordination activities in the control of wildlife and drug trafficking, and transnational crime in the region.

Operation Mekong Dragon, initiated by Vietnam Customs and China Customs, was launched in September 2018 and received great technical support from the UNODC, RILO AP and six customs administrations in the Mekong sub-region. The campaign has experienced four phases with the participation of 24 customs administrations and five agencies, including the Australian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Singapore Drug Center, Singapore National Parks Board and RILO AP and UNODC. Viet Nam has been an active and key player in the Operation. Per the report, Vietnam Customs, within the framework of participating in the campaign from 2018 to 2022, had chaired and coordinated with other customs administrations to handle 874 cases of drug smuggling and trafficking, arresting 843 suspects; and handle 113 cases of smuggling and trafficking of endangered species of wild fauna and flora on the CITES.

During the official visit to China by General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 2022, the Operation Mekong Dragon campaign was included in Vietnam-China Joint

---

<sup>3</sup> Humane Society International report to Viet Nam CITES MA on November 2023

<sup>4</sup> [Online Customs news](#)





Statement on further promoting and deepening cooperation between the two sides. This shows the importance of the campaign in both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in controlling the trafficking of wildlife specimens.

Based on the proven success, to ensure the effectiveness of cooperation after Operation Mekong Dragon IV, Vietnam Customs envisaged a proposal for the next phase as to:

- Expand the scope of the campaign to other relevant regions (such as Africa, Europe, etc.) through an inter-regional cooperation mechanism with the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILOs) of the World Customs Organization to detect, prevent and control the whole transport process to assess the entire transnational smuggling ring.
- Reform the information sharing method about the campaign more effectively. Specifically, in addition to the current exchange mechanism, it is necessary to share and analyze information by groups of countries with the same key lines based on seizures to improve the efficiency of cooperation in the investigation and handling of violations.

### ***5.2. Operation Thunder***<sup>5</sup>

Operation Thunder is a campaign initiated by the Customs to fight against criminals in illegal trade of wild fauna and flora. This year 2023 marks the seventh campaigns in the series of the Operation as a result of cooperation between WCO and INTERPOL. The Operation's objectives are to strengthen the cooperation, information exchange among member states; in the same time, to facilitate coordination between Customs and Police in conducting seizures, handling of violation cases, dismantle international criminal syndicates in illegal trade and transport of wildlife species. To implement the Operation comprehensively, the General Department of Customs of Viet Nam has requested their directly under authorities to the following mandates: enhancing collecting, information exchange, monitor and control of import and export towards conducting seizure activities in relation to illegal trade of wildlife specimens; and to coordinate with other enforcement authorities as police, border force control, forest ranger in relevant work aspects.

The results of the Operation Thunder in 2023 will be informed to the Standing Committee when information is available for reporting./.

---

<sup>5</sup> General Department of Customs [website](#)



**ANNEX 1. SEIZURES AND PROCEEDINGS IN RHINOCEROS SPECIMENS 2022 – SEPTEMBER 2023**

No	Information source/ Seized by	Date of seizure	Location of seizure	Country of origin	Country of transit/re-export	Country of destination	Quantity, type of specimens	Mode of transport	Method of concealment	Mode of detection	Information suspect	Status of the case
1	Ha Noi city Environment Police	Seizure: 30/1/2021 Trial: 30/09/2022	Ha Noi			Viet Nam	301g white rhino horn	Unidentified	Online trade	Seizure	02 suspects	1st subject: 30-month imprisonment 2nd subject: 36-month imprisonment
2	Hung Nguyen District Police (Nghe An province)	Seizure: 09/9/2021 Trial: 28/2/2022	Nghe An			Viet Nam	06-piece white rhino; 01 piece black rhino, weighted 0.711kg			Seizure	02 suspects	1st subject: 7-year 3-month imprisonment, 50,000 million VND fine 2nd subject: 24-month probation
3	Ha Noi city Anti-Smuggling Police and Noi Bai International Airport	Seizure: 24/9/2021 Trial: 01/07/2022	Ha Noi	Mozambique		Viet Nam	9.3kg white rhino pieces	Air way	Hidden in suitcases, covered by aluminum foil and plastic bags	Seizure	02 suspects	1st subject: 8-year imprisonment 2nd subject: 7-year imprisonment
4	Noi Bai International Airport Customs	Seizure: 17/4/2022 Trial: 29/12/2022	Ha Noi	Angola	UAE	Viet Nam	06 rhino horn pieces, weighted 1.9kg	Air way	Hidden in personal baggage	Data analysis, risk management	01 suspect	6-year imprisonment



BỘ NÔNG NGHIỆP VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN NÔNG THÔN  
CƠ QUAN THẨM QUYỀN QUẢN LÝ CITES VIỆT NAM  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
VIET NAM CITES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



No	Information source/ Seized by	Date of seizure	Location of seizure	Country of origin	Country of transit/re-export	Country of destination	Quantity, type of specimens	Mode of transport	Method of concealment	Mode of detection	Information suspect	Status of the case
										nt, screening		
5	Yen Thanh District Police (Nghe An Province)	Seizure: 10/6/2022 Trial: 15/11/2022				Viet Nam	164g black rhinoceros horn		Online trade	Seizure	01 suspect	12-month imprisonment
6	Tan Binh district Investigation Police Agency, Ho Chi Minh city	Seizure: 24/6/2022 Trial: 18/8/2023	Ho Chi Minh city	Luanda Angola	Dubai UAE	Viet Nam	2 kg rhino horn piece, 1/6kg ivory pieces	Air way	Hidden among beef and goat meat in nylon bags	Inspection	02 suspects	5-year imprisonment
7	Ha Noi city Environment Police	Seizure: 14/9/2022 Trial: 12/5/2023	Ha Noi			Viet Nam	02 kg rhino horn piece	Land way		Seizure	03 suspects	1st subject: 42 month, 50 million VND fine, 2nd subject: 36 month 3rd subject: 30-month imprisonment
8	Noi Bai International Airport	Seizure: 08/07/2022	Ha Noi	Angola		Viet Nam	9 kg rhino horn, 6 kg ivory	Air way	Hidden among beef	Inspection	01 suspect	Under investigation





BỘ NÔNG NGHIỆP VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN NÔNG THÔN  
CƠ QUAN THẨM QUYỀN QUẢN LÝ CITES VIỆT NAM  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
VIET NAM CITES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



No	Information source/ Seized by	Date of seizure	Location of seizure	Country of origin	Country of transit/re-export	Country of destination	Quantity, type of specimens	Mode of transport	Method of concealment	Mode of detection	Information suspect	Status of the case
9	Pleiku city Economics Police (Gia Lai Province)	Seizure: 18/11/2022 Trial: 16/6/2023	Gia Lai			Viet Nam	02 rhino horn pieces weighted 100g		Online trade		02 suspects	1st subject: 18-month imprisonment 2nd subject: 15-month imprisonment
10	Ha Noi city Environment Police	Seizure: 05/01/2023	Ha Noi	Angola		Viet Nam	7.108 kg rhino horn pieces	Land way	Hidden in suspect's house	Search	01 suspect	Under investigation
11	Ha Noi city Police, Noi Bai International Airport Customs	Seizure: 25/4/2023	Ha Noi	Angola	Qatar	Viet Nam	04 rhino horns weighted 11,82 kg	Air way	Hidden in checked baggage	Data analysis, risk management, screening	01 suspect	Under investigation
12	Ha Noi city Customs Department	29/5/2023	Noi Bai Airport, Ha Noi	Ethiopia	Thailand	Viet Nam	2.5kg rhino horn	Air way	Hidden in personal baggage	Data analysis, risk management, screening		Under investigation
13	Ha Noi city Customs Department	27/6/2023	Noi Bai Airport, Ha Noi	Angola	UAE, Korea	Viet Nam	22.63kg rhino horn	Air way	Hidden in personal baggage	Data analysis, risk management, screening		Under investigation



BỘ NÔNG NGHIỆP VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN NÔNG THÔN  
CƠ QUAN THẨM QUYỀN QUẢN LÝ CITES VIỆT NAM  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
VIET NAM CITES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



No	Information source/ Seized by	Date of seizure	Location of seizure	Country of origin	Country of transit/re-export	Country of destination	Quantity, type of specimens	Mode of transport	Method of concealment	Mode of detection	Information suspect	Status of the case
14	Noi Bai International Airport Customs	Seizure: 28/6/2023	Ha Noi	Angola		Viet Nam	20kg rhino horn, 42kg elephant ivory bracelet, chopsticks	Air way		Seizure	05 suspects	Under investigation
15	Lai Chau province Criminal Police Department	Seizure: 10/9/2023	Lai Chau	Lao PDR		Viet Nam	759,6 grams white rhino horn	Unidentified		Inspection	01 suspect	Under investigation



## ANNEX 2. ACTIVITY FOOTAGES



The cycle event on 11/3/2023 in Ban Me Thuot city, co-hosted by the Dak Lak Province Committee of the Fatherland Front, Regional IV Forest Protection Department, Yokdon National Park. Photo by Project STW at the [Committee Webpage](#)



The cycle race on 12/8/2023 at Yokdon National Park. Photo by Phan Nga at [VTCnews](#).