

SA still committed to signing of MoU with Vietnam

South Africa remains committed to entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vietnam that will promote cooperation between the two countries and compliance with CITES. The MoU will be addressing, in particular, the illegal trade in rhino horn that has seen a scourge in rhino poaching.

Contrary to recent media reports, both countries are still committed to entering into an MoU and discussions on a future date for both ministers to sign the MoU are already under way.

Government is convinced that for South Africa to effectively deal with the current scourge of poaching, and with illegal hunting largely driven by international demand for the rhino horn, these international engagements and agreements are crucial.

Latest statistics

This as the latest rhino poaching statistics indicate that a total of 467 rhinos have been lost to illegal killings since the beginning of this year. The Kruger National Park remains the hardest hit having lost 281 rhinos. The provinces most affected by rhino poaching are KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the North-West, collectively accounting for 152 rhinos lost to illegal killings since the beginning of this year. A total of 208 people have been arrested in connection with rhino related activities.

In September 2011, the governments of Vietnam and South Africa agreed on a process towards the finalisation of the MoU that will see the collaboration of natural resource management, wildlife protection and law enforcement. South Africa had hoped to sign the MoU at the recently held meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in India which was concluded last week.

Objectives of MoU

The objective of the MoU is to promote cooperation between the two countries in the field of biodiversity conservation and protection, law enforcement and compliance with CITES on the basis of equity and mutual benefit. The two countries have agreed that the MoU and the subsequent implementation plan allow co-operation in areas of biodiversity conservation, biodiversity law enforcement, wildlife trade, information and intelligence sharing and gathering, permit issuing processes and verification mechanisms, monitoring and reporting systems, technology development and sharing, capacity building and training, prosecution and law enforcement, awareness, knowledge and research, custom services and legal systems within which the two countries operate.