

SA Government continues the fight against rhino poaching

To date, 480 rhino have been killed for their horns, while 140 poachers have been arrested in South Africa. The South African government has reiterated its commitment to fighting the scourge of rhino poaching.



As part of interventions to address the scourge, cabinet recently approved that South Africa prepares and submits a rhino trade proposal for consideration at the 17th Conference of Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2016. The cabinet also approved the establishment of a Task Team to assist in preparation for the CoP17 CITES, since the development of a trade proposal should take into account numerous aspects, including the appropriate model for trade; the anticipated changes in the markets and the demand for rhino horn; the additional control measures and requirements to be introduced; and potential trade partners.

Rhino Issue Management

The decision to table a proposal at the next CITES CoP was not taken lightly. It followed an extensive public consultation process, nationally and internationally. In 2012 a national consultation process, known as the Rhino Issue Management process relating to rhino conservation was initiated with various stakeholders. This process resulted in the Rhino Issue Manager (RIM) Report that has since been tabled in cabinet and MECs. The RIM Report makes recommendations on funding, rhino conservation, safety and security, and commerce (trade).

On the matter of international trade for commercial purposes, as was presented and approved by cabinet recently, this will only be allowed if approved by the Conference of Parties. Currently, international trade in rhino horn for commercial purposes is prohibited and this prohibition can only be lifted, if agreed by the CoP. To ensure parties to CITES are able to make a decision relating to this matter, a proposal must be submitted for consideration by the parties.

The South African government believes trade must be seen in the broader context of a myriad of interventions being implemented to address the scourge of rhino poaching. Government does not view trade as a panacea for the on-going scourge, but is part of a number of measures implemented.

The recent cabinet meeting also approved the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) comprising of the

ministers of Water and Environmental Affairs, International Relations and Cooperation, Trade and Industry, of Finance, Science and Technology, of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, of Rural Development and Land Reform, of Economic Development and of Tourism, to provide guidance relating to preparations in respect of the trade proposal. The Task Team responsible for the technical details referred to above will report to the IMC. Despite our stated objective to present a trade proposal at COP17, South Africa will continue to employ numerous safety and security measures.

Anti-poaching measures implemented

Among the steps that have already been taken are:

- the deployment of additional anti-poaching units, the police and SANDF in the Kruger National Park;
- the prioritisation of rhino crimes by the justice system;
- the implementation of harsher sentences for poachers, couriers and members of poaching syndicates;
- the prioritisation of the development of an improved electronic permitting system
- the implementation of revised norms and standards for the marking of rhinoceros horn and for the hunting of rhinoceros for trophy hunting purposes to strengthen the requirements relating to marking and hunting; and include the requirement to take DNA samples to facilitate monitoring and enforcement. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of hunting applications received, with 69 applications received to date for hunts during 2013.

In addition, the National Environmental Management Laws First Amendment Bill [B13B-2012] aimed at strengthening the regulatory and enforcement provisions to prevent abuse of the hunting permitting system is at an advanced stage in the parliamentary process, and is expected to be enacted within the coming months. Once promulgated, the amendments will ensure that a person involved in an illegal restricted activity, but who does not physically carry out that activity, can also be found guilty of an offence. The bill further prescribes that all specimens in transit through the country must be accompanied by the necessary documentation. This important provision will assist in addressing the movement of illegal specimens.

With regards to strengthening the regulatory and enforcement provisions in the hunting industry, the bill will allow the minister to limit the number of permits that can be issued in order to protect a species. The government would like to reiterate its commitment to working in partnership with stakeholders and experts to ensure a feasible model for trade is proposed at the next CoP in South Africa. All views expressed by interested and affected stakeholders involved in rhino conservation will be considered.

South Africans are urged to report incidents of poaching and tip-offs to the anonymous tip-off lines +27(0)800 205 005, +27(0)8600 10111 or Crime-Line on 32211.

Rhino poaching statistics

SA	2010	2011	2012	2013
KNP (SANParks)	146	252	425	297
MNP (SANParks)	0	6	3	0
GP	15	9	1	1
LIM	52	74	59	50
MP	17	31	28	34
NW	57	21	77	53
EC	4	11	7	2
FS	3	4	0	0
KZN	38	34	66	43
WC	0	6	2	0
NC	1	0	0	0
	333	448	668	480

Rhino poaching arrests statistics

South Africa - Arrests	2013	2012	2011	2010
KNP	60	73	82	67
MNP	0	0	0	0
Gauteng (GP)	3	26	16	10
Mpumalanga (MP)	9	66	73	16
Eastern Cape (EC)	0	0	2	7
Limpopo (LP)	27	43	34	36
North West (NW)	11	32	21	2
Free State (FS)	0	6	0	0
KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)	30	20	4	25
Western Cape (WC)	0	0	0	2
Northern Cape (NC)	0	1	0	0
Total	140	267	232	165

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