

Konica Minolta confirms its support for rhino conservation

The WWF has welcomed a recent decision by Konica Minolta South Africa to renew its support for WWF's African Rhino Programme (ARP). Their support of rhino conservation work over the past 12 months has produced significant results, including bringing East Africa's rhino range states on board to support the building of the African rhino database and prosecution-driven investigations. In addition they have donated more than R1.2 million over the past year.

For every bizhub sold, Konica Minolta South Africa makes a difference by contributing to WWF's ARP, which supports RhODIS, the country's rhino DNA database. "RhODIS is making a solid impact on the sentencing of poachers and the length of jail-terms handed down. Recently, two men were jailed for 29 years each for being in possession of rhino horn and the illegal hunting of two rhino," says Alan Griffith, Konica Minolta South Africa's MD.

DNA helped in prosecution

"A sample of each carcass was taken and, with the help of Dr. Cindy Harper, head of the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory at the University of Pretoria, and the RhODIS lab team, they positively matched the DNA to the horns found the day prior. Owing to this match, the Nelspruit Magistrate Court could prosecute the two men on both counts," Griffith says.

He emphasises that it is cases like this one that illustrates the chain of events that RhODIS sets in motion to help stop the illegal trade of rhino horn and the poaching of these animals. This has motivated Konica Minolta South Africa to continue its support of RhODIS and highlight its impact. "Being the first country to successfully match the DNA of rhino horn to the DNA of a carcass should make every South African proud and aware of this patented forensic innovation," he adds.

Achievements through support

"Konica Minolta South Africa's contribution strengthens South Africa's ability to help ensure the survival of the rhino and continues to be a major source of rhinos for the rest of Africa," says Dr. Joseph Okori, head of WWF's ARP. He adds that over the past year, Konica Minolta South Africa's investment went into supporting and achieving:

- Specialised rhino and horn scanners for micro-chipped marked rhinos and their horns;
- Capacity building and training;
- Presentation and peer review of RhODIS application and achievements;
- Purchase of over 300 DNA forensic kits;
- Support for RhODIS application in Kenya; and
- Contribution to over 400 investigative cases in South Africa.

In light of these successes, WWF congratulates Konica Minolta South Africa's sustained effort in addressing the poaching crisis. The conservation organisation sees this as a clear sign of how strategic corporate engagement can make a difference in ensuring the survival of a highly threatened species like the African rhino.