

### 3.6 Existing Structures for the Co-ordination of Rhino Conservation (Continental, Regional and National) (M. Brooks, AfRSG)

We have a good understanding of what constitutes effective rhino conservation, but each country requires a tailor-made strategy given its unique characteristics and situation. Often overlooked is the need for strategic alliances and linkages both within and outside the country, and the presence of effective structures which will result in the implementation of successful programmes. Co-ordinating structures are required to ensure that:

- ◆ Species survival objectives are met;
- ◆ Effective strategies and action plans are developed in collaboration with all the stakeholders;
- ◆ Techniques are developed to meet both security and biological management challenges;
- ◆ Information and expertise are shared;
- ◆ Major donors support the most important programmes;
- ◆ Effective rhino programmes are implemented.

Various structures operate at the continental, regional and local levels as follows.

The IUCN SSC African Rhino Specialist Group provides the global perspective required for the survival of the six taxa of African rhino, and also constitutes a framework, policy and technical umbrella for initiatives at the regional and national levels.

Regional security co-ordination mechanisms include, inter alia, the Rhino and Elephant Security Group, the Lusaka Agreement and the Endangered Species Protection Unit.

Other relevant "structures" include the African Rhinos Owners Association, bilateral programmes such as that between SA National Parks and Malawi, and WWF's African Rhino Working Group.

The SADC rhino programme will provide some co-ordination, direction and support for 10 range states that together conserve 95% of African rhinos and includes Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Swaziland which together comprise the Rhino Management Group of Southern Africa.

National committees are critically important as they are ultimately responsible for facilitating or achieving the actual implementation of rhino conservation programmes because they:

- ◆ Provide a national focus on rhino conservation; thus heightening its profile;
- ◆ Allow for full stakeholder participation (state, private sector and communities);
- ◆ Evaluate current policy and programmes and ensure that improvements are implemented.

It is very important for individuals with influence within countries to be active within these national communities, and that at least one such person sits on the regional (e.g. Rhino Management Group) and continental (African Rhino Specialist Group)

structures. In this way we can achieve synergy between continental and national initiatives, ensuring that common goals and strategies are followed.

### 3.7 Review of the Status and Conservation Biology of African Rhino ( R. Emslie, AfRSG )

All delegates at the meeting were given copies of the recently published (1999) IUCN African Rhino Status Survey and Conservation Action plan. This background talk presented at the meeting primarily presented key background information concerning the three subspecies of African rhino's covered by the SADC rhino programme. For further detailed background information interested readers are referred to the IUCN African Rhino Action Plan. The meeting was informed that the next continental statistics are due to be compiled by IUCN African Rhino Specialist Group at its May 2000 meeting to be held in Tanzania.

This background talk began with the population totals for the two African rhino species (Black 2,600, White 8,465) and three Asian rhino species (Indian 2,520, Sumatran 300 and Javan 60). Maps from the Action Plan were then used to show the historical distribution of both species of African rhino. In the case of the white rhino, the major geographical separation between the northern and southern white rhino was pointed out. The six African rhino subspecies recognised by the AfRSG were then listed and it was explained that the SADC rhino programme only covered three of these subspecies:- the southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*), the southwestern black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*), and the South Central black rhino (*D.b.minor*). An overhead then showed which SADC states held populations of which rhino subspecies with Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe holding populations of southern white rhino; Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe holding populations of southern central black rhino; and Namibia and South Africa being the only range states with populations of south-western black rhino. The northern white rhino population in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the eastern black rhino in northern Tanzania, and the out-of-range eastern black rhino populations in South Africa do not fall within the ambit of the SADC rhino programme.

The rapid decline in numbers of black rhino from approximately 100,000 in 1960 to 2,475 in 1992 was described, showing that the number of range states with black rhino decreased from 1980 to 1982 from 18 to 13. It was then explained that since 1992 numbers of black rhino in Africa appeared to stabilise (primarily with increases in Namibia and South Africa cancelling out declines in some other range states) with a slight increase being recorded between 1995 and 1997. By 1997 there were an estimated 2,600 black rhinos in Africa spread throughout ten range states. Since 1980 it is presumed that the black rhino has gone extinct in Angola, Botswana, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Malawi (since reintroduced), Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zambia.

Black rhino estimates by country were then compared for 1980 and 1997. Over this period numbers only increased in Namibia and South Africa with black rhino also being re-established in Swaziland. The 1997 estimates also showed how four major range states conserve the majority of Africa's black rhinos with three of them being members of SADC, namely Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe (Kenya is the fourth major range state). Tanzania, Mozambique, Swaziland and the Malawi are the other SADC range states with lesser populations of black rhino. A map from the IUCN African rhino action plan was then shown, giving the current distribution of black rhinos by subspecies. It was mentioned that the boundaries between black rhino subspecies were not "hard-edged" like the boundary between the two white rhino subspecies. In 1997 there were five AfRSG-rated *Key1*, six *Key2* and 17 *Important* black rhino populations in Africa. The numbers and proportions of the four black rhino subspecies conserved by the SADC region were then shown. The two subspecies of