

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Doha (Qatar), 13-25 March 2010

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

Rhinoceroses

REPORT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1. This document has been prepared by the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 14th meeting (The Hague, 2007), the Conference of the Parties adopted the following Decisions in relation to rhinoceroses:

Directed to Parties

- 14.88 *Range States of African and Asian rhinoceroses and Parties that have stocks of rhinoceros horns and derivatives thereof should declare the status of their stocks of rhinoceros horns and derivatives before the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in accordance with a format to be circulated by the Secretariat.*

Directed to the Secretariat

14.89 The Secretariat shall:

- a) develop, in collaboration with the African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and TRAFFIC, a format for the declarations referred to in Decision 14.88 and distribute it through a Notification to the Parties;
- b) invite TRAFFIC to review information on the accumulation of rhinoceros horn stocks in range States and the routes by which horns enter and flow to illegal markets, with priority countries for such review being those in which either there has been a recent significant increase in poaching levels, where discrepancies might exist in reported horn stockpiles, where volumes of horn stockpiles are unknown or where insufficient crossborder collaboration to combat illegal rhinoceros horn trade has been reported; and
- c) request IUCN – The World Conservation Union and TRAFFIC to include an analysis of the information provided by the Parties on stocks of rhinoceros horns and derivatives thereof, and of the review referred to in paragraph b) above in their reporting to the Secretariat pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP14) and for consideration at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

14.90 The Secretariat shall:

- a) examine the implementation of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP14) in the range States where illegal poaching of rhinoceroses appears to have increased and to pose a significant

threat to populations of rhinoceroses, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Zimbabwe;

- b) collaborate with the World Heritage Convention in addressing rhinoceros poaching and illegal trade issues in World Heritage sites in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, inter alia to support greater coordination with neighbouring countries, facilitate the collation and distribution of intelligence information and provide capacity building for wildlife law enforcement personnel;
- c) encourage relevant range States to link rhinoceros conservation actions where possible with the CITES site-based programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants; and
- d) report on the implementation of these Decisions at the 57th and 58th meetings of the Standing Committee and at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Decision-related activities

3. The Standing Committee reviewed this subject at its 57th and 58th meetings (Geneva, 2008 and 2009), where it considered documents SC57 Doc. 34 and SC58 Doc. 37. These documents were reports submitted by the Secretariat in compliance with Decision 14.90, paragraph d).
4. With regard to Decisions 14.88 and 14.89, paragraph a), the Secretariat issued a Notification as instructed. However, at the time of writing (October 2009), only seven Parties (two of which are range States) had submitted forms giving details of their rhinoceros horn stocks. This figure is extremely disappointing and clearly prevents any meaningful work being conducted by IUCN or TRAFFIC in relation to the relevant parts of Decision 14.89, paragraphs b) and c).
5. In relation to Decision 14.90, paragraph a), the Secretariat has not had the resources available to conduct *in situ* work in any of the three named countries. It did, however, ensure that Nepal and Zimbabwe participated in the meeting of the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force.
6. In relation to Decision 14.90, paragraph b), the Secretariat has not had the funds to undertake the requested capacity building work. It remains hopeful, however, that it may be able to do so in conjunction with Interpol before the present meeting.
7. With regard to Decision 14.90, paragraph c), the Central Coordinating Unit of the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) has provided such encouragement.
8. MIKE sites that contain both elephants and rhinoceroses occur in East and southern Africa, and in Asia. Rhinoceroses were recently declared extinct in MIKE sites in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
9. In implementing the site-based MIKE programme, the Secretariat has tried to encourage relevant range States to link it with rhinoceros conservation actions. Such actions have also been instigated by the countries themselves and by non-governmental organizations. Examples include the following:
 - a) In order to enhance the usefulness of the MIKE programme and provide incentives for more thorough data collection and consistent data flow, a new and comprehensive information system has been deployed that is useful to wildlife authorities and protected area managers well beyond the requirements of MIKE. This system, MIST (Management Information SysTem), allows for the management, analysis and display of information on other types of illegal activities than poaching (such as illegal harvesting, charcoal production, land clearing by fire, illegal fishing, trespassing, etc.) and other species in addition to elephants, such as rhinoceroses. MIST has been adopted by wildlife authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. It is also being deployed in the Congo, Gabon and the Sudan and nine Asian countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, and its implementation in other countries in Africa is underway with support of the MIKE programme.
 - b) In Southeast Asian MIKE sites, the use of MIST as a common Law Enforcement Monitoring (LEM) database facilitates sharing of protocols, reporting indicators and data, including carcass data, among the sites. MIST has been installed in so-called 'Tiger Landscapes' as well as several MIKE sites in the context of the Tigers Forever programme to recover tiger populations and preserve key landscapes

(funded by Panthera Foundation and implemented by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Asia Program). The programme aims at improving law enforcement by equipping ranger teams, deploying anti-poaching patrols and setting up and applying MIST databases. This directly benefits elephant and rhinoceros populations in MIKE Sites and Tiger Landscapes.

- c) The Law Enforcement Monitoring (or ranger patrol) training curriculum for enforcement staff in Southeast Asia have been increasingly standardized and applied in biodiversity-rich areas, including at the MIKE sites. This is helping to strengthen the regional networks of reserves against poaching of and illegal trading in all wildlife, including elephants and rhinoceroses.
- d) The Worldwide Fund for Nature is trying to restore rhinoceros and elephant populations at eight conservation landscapes across Southeast Asia, including four current and three prospective MIKE sites. The objectives are to protect and restore habitat, increase anti-poaching patrols, create accurate maps for land-use planning, strengthen existing rhino populations and establish new ones, and collect population data to improve management strategies for Asian elephants and rhinoceroses. This includes implementing MIST and developing formalized ranger training whereby data collected from anti-poaching patrols and monitoring human-elephant conflicts could feed into MIKE.
- e) Collaboration among MIST-using agencies, countries and organizations to streamline future development of MIST has been initiated and will be taken further. In practice, this involves synergizing deployment and training strategies, and coordinating any further improvements to the current MIST package, ensuring that conservation data and management needs for elephants, rhinoceroses and other species are fully covered.
- f) Some range States of both rhinoceroses and elephants have taken initiatives to streamline elephant and rhinoceros monitoring and conservation action. In Kruger National Park in South Africa, the MIKE forms to collect and analyse data on elephant carcasses have been adapted and are used for recording rhinoceros carcasses. In Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the aerial searches for the last surviving northern white rhinoceroses, *Ceratotherium simum cotoni*, were combined with surveys of other big game species, most notably buffaloes and elephants, and these surveys results could be used in the MIKE programme. In Sumatra (Indonesia), WCS collaborates with the authorities in a Wildlife Crimes Unit to investigate wildlife trade, provide legal support in prosecutions and promote awareness of the law. This work has contributed to the arrest of over 25 tiger, elephant and rhinoceros poachers since 2003, and an observed drop in reported crime where enforcement efforts have been greatest. In Malaysia, a Rhino Protection Unit, tasked with anti-poaching, habitat protection and restoration of populations, may adopt MIST as the system for managing enforcement data coming in from mobile patrols with the potential for sharing data with existing tiger and elephant protection teams. This would be vital to protect the dwindling population of Sumatran rhinoceroses in Peninsula Malaysia.
- g) The MIKE programme co-supports the publication of *Pachyderm*, which in turn offers a forum for sharing scientific and technical information on African elephants and the five rhinoceros species.
- h) In Africa, MIKE is engaging with ongoing rhinoceros monitoring programmes, particularly in southern Africa and Kenya, to promote the harmonization of methodologies and to exchange experiences and lessons learned. In this context, three experts from the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group have been invited to participate in a workshop on law enforcement and detection effort, convened by the MIKE Programme in December 2009.

Poaching and illegal trade

10. A CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force was convened in November 2008. The Secretariat believes this was a particularly successful meeting and was very pleased with the outcomes (described in document SC57 Doc. 37). The Secretariat conducted a mission to Yemen, to assess possible illegal trade affecting this country and the outcome was reported to the Standing Committee at its 58th meeting.
11. South Africa has instigated several measures, including legal requirements, to combat the exploitation of legal hunting of rhinoceros and the subsequent export of horns as hunting trophies. The requirements also address the possession of horns by individuals at the domestic level.
12. Zimbabwe has suffered regular poaching of rhinoceroses, especially in 2008 and 2009, and some of this appeared to be of a highly organized structure. The Secretariat noted many media reports alleging the

involvement of government and military officials in conducting or orchestrating poaching and illegal trade. Whilst some such reports were alarmist and sensationalist in nature, the Secretariat also received information from non-governmental organizations and independent apparently-reliable sources expressing concern that the efforts of CITES authorities to combat such crimes were not being fully supported by other national agencies.

13. The Secretariat communicated with the CITES Management Authority of Zimbabwe and it was agreed, regardless of the accuracy of such reports, that a very negative image was being created of the country and that the effectiveness of the Convention, at national and international levels, was being called into question. Subsequently, the Secretariat proposed visiting Zimbabwe prior to CoP15, so that an accurate report could be provided on this subject. It was proposed that the Secretary-General of CITES lead such a mission. A response to these proposals is awaited from Zimbabwe.
14. Poaching of rhinoceroses in several other range States continues to occur at significant levels. It seems likely that well over 200 rhinoceroses have been killed across southern Africa in 2009. The Secretariat also noted a particularly worrying development in crime associated with this species when an armed robbery occurred at a store in a national park, where the perpetrators were intent upon obtaining rhinoceros horns kept there.
15. In August 2009, the Secretariat conducted a mission to Viet Nam as this country appears to be significantly affected by illegal trade in rhinoceros horn. Prior to the mission, it arranged for the briefing document, prepared following the meeting of the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force, and the CITES/Interpol manual on *Controlled Deliveries* to be translated into Vietnamese, so as to make this advice more readily accessible by national enforcement agencies.
16. The Secretariat met with the agencies primarily responsible for enforcement of the Convention in Viet Nam, namely the Bureau of Environment Police, Customs and the Forest Protection Department. It visited the cities of Hanoi, Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City, where it spoke with officials who have engaged in operational seizures and investigations related to illegal trade in specimens of CITES-listed species, including rhinoceros.
17. The Secretariat also met with officials of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Hanoi, who undertook to help raise awareness of illegal wildlife trade, especially in rhinoceros horn, at the highest levels in Viet Nam's law enforcement community.
18. The Secretariat believes that this mission will have raised awareness of the significant levels of illegal trade that affect Viet Nam and that it should lead to greater national and international communication, coordination and collaboration. Following the mission, the Secretariat wrote to the CITES Management Authority of Viet Nam, providing a number of suggestions as to how it believed enforcement might be improved. Due to the nature of the suggestions, it is not appropriate for this communication to be made public.
19. The Secretariat has heard, from a variety of sources, suggestions as to what may be prompting the dramatic increase in demand for rhinoceros horn that has taken place in recent years. Following its mission to Viet Nam, it is satisfied that, to a significant degree, it is being driven by a belief that rhinoceros horn may prevent persons from contracting cancer. It is apparently also believed that the ingestion of powdered rhinoceros horn will halt the progress of cancers among those already suffering from the disease. It seems this belief is spreading throughout parts of east Asia but is especially strong in Viet Nam and China.
20. Huge sums are being demanded of cancer sufferers from those who are trading in rhinoceros horn. A significant market also seems to have developed in the production and sale of fake rhinoceros horn. As might be imagined, some people who have contracted cancer (or their relatives) are willing to pay almost anything in the belief that they can enter a state of remission. Should these beliefs continue to spread, poaching of rhinoceroses in the wild is likely to continue unabated and perhaps increase even further.
21. Aside from rhinoceroses in the wild being targeted, the Secretariat is aware that individuals are touring the world, especially Europe and North America, seeking to purchase rhinoceros horns in private ownership. Prices for such horns, usually originally acquired as hunting trophies, have also risen substantially. Some of these horns are decades old. It is worth noting that the risks for the eventual consumers of such horns may be significant, since arsenic was previously commonly used in taxidermy procedures and this chemical may still be inside the horns.

22. As stated at meetings of the Standing Committee, the Secretariat believes that the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn is one of the most serious criminal activities currently faced by CITES. It consists of sophisticated and organized structures that CITES and wildlife law enforcement authorities cannot respond to effectively on their own. The restricted-circulation briefing document that was prepared after the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting contains a range of detailed advice on how countries might respond. The Secretariat is, of course, very willing to provide as much support as it can to countries affected by such illegal trade, but multi-agency approaches at the national level must be instigated if such crimes are to be eradicated.
23. The Secretariat is also very conscious, however, of the need to respond to the belief that rhinoceros horn is efficacious in the treatment or prevention of cancer. It is despicable that criminals are financially exploiting sufferers, and their relatives, at a time when they will be struggling to cope with distressing and sometimes terminal medical conditions. The Secretariat has made contact with the World Health Organization and the traditional medicine community to seek information and advice on how to tackle this aspect of illegal trade. Detailed responses are awaited. For the moment, the Secretariat has no specific recommendations to make to the present meeting but hopes that it may have additional information to provide orally.