

**Rhino Summit Emergency Plan of Action:**  
Toward a Comprehensive Response to the Rhino Poaching Crisis  
Version 1.0

Nairobi, Kenya  
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## **Introduction**

Africa's rhinoceros are once again under threat of extinction. More than 900 rhinos have been poached across Africa over the past three years, an all-time high being driven by growing demand for rhino horn. Protection is becoming increasingly expensive and risky, as poachers devise new ways of killing rhinos. The situation is rapidly reaching crisis levels and requires far-reaching efforts to ensure the continued survival of rhinos across Africa. Africa's rhino population is currently estimated at 25,000—still low in relation to historical numbers—and it is suggested that if poaching continues at current rates, there will no longer be any rhino left in the wild by 2025.

Individual range states, private landowners, and conservation NGOs have each taken measures to respond to this crisis. Efforts are uneven and uncoordinated, however. If improvements in security are made in one place, the threats simply move to another. Similarly, while South Africa is currently experiencing the majority of the rhino poaching, it is expected that poaching will quickly move to the other rhino range states if South Africa successfully secures its rhino.

The emergency situation of rhino poaching in Africa has prompted this gathering of the African conservation community to formulate a comprehensive, coordinated response to the rhino poaching crisis, with a focus on finding immediately actionable steps that target the next six to nine months. The aim: to suppress supply of rhino horn (through various anti-poaching engagements) and to decrease or eliminate demand (through public awareness). The ultimate aim is to grow the rhino population.

### *Key points of consensus*

Attendees have come to some key points of consensus on a number of areas. Stakeholders have also outlined more specific actions and priorities, which are detailed in the sections that follow.

**There is growing indignation about the escalating poaching on the continent.** Africa is rapidly losing a heritage, an iconic species that drives tourism and wider economic development and other benefits on the continent. Concerted and strong action is needed by governments, citizens and the conservation community to prevent the extinction of this species.

**Rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking is a serious, organized crime, on par with drug and human trafficking, and should therefore be treated as such.**

**It is imperative that response be implemented across four tiers, or categories,**

**simultaneously in order to make greatest impact.** These tiers are:

- *On the ground.* Strengthening rhino surveillance and anti-poaching units with new strategies, tools and resources.
- *Security and law enforcement.* Strengthening law enforcement and coordination at national and regional levels.
- *Rhino horn demand and illegal trade.* Conducting public education and awareness to curb rhino horn demand and illegal trade.
- *At the policy level.* Expanding outreach to influence policy makers, financiers and government officials at the highest appropriate levels.

The specific recommendations will be organized along the aforementioned tiers.

**Strong political will is needed throughout Africa to support rhino conservation measures, and strong coordination between countries is required to enable intelligence gathering, effective anti-poaching, and prosecution across the rhino range states.**

**Remaining rhino populations need to be urgently secured.** To do so, strong field anti-poaching and rhino surveillance measures are needed.

**The demand side of rhino horn must be addressed.**

**Stiffer penalties are needed.** Laws related to wildlife offenses in many countries are currently quite lenient and cannot deter poaching and trade in a commodity that is priced more than gold, at US\$50,000 per kg. Stiffer penalties are needed but changes in laws are often a slow process.

**Given the complicated, multi-dimensional nature of the rhino poaching situation, funds are needed to support all of the specific actions recommended by this group of stakeholders.** Therefore, we collectively urge that a rhino crisis fundraising campaign be undertaken by international conservation NGOs. This central fund will then be responsible for distributing resources across the rhino range states for maximum impact and conduct appropriate follow-up on results.

**Finally, strategic collaboration is key.** While the stakeholders at this meeting hope that the short-term next steps being suggested will have immediate impact in reducing rhino poaching and stabilizing rhino population numbers, we also understand that longer term actions need to be implemented, with continued follow-up across the various rhino stakeholder groups to assess the success or failure of all of these actions. Furthermore, the legalization of the rhino horn trade continues to be a complex matter that requires ongoing discussion to consider all sides of the situation. Only through continued discussion can the African conservation community as a whole be able to present a unified response regarding this contentious issue.

Following are more specific recommendations that the stakeholders proposed be implemented among the rhino range states to immediately halt the plummeting rhino numbers across Africa. Implementation and impact of these actions are intended for the short term.

## **On-site Rhino Protection**

### **1. Collect and catalog the DNA of all remaining rhinos.**

Collecting and cataloging rhino DNA is a tool with which to oversee rhino populations. DNA records allow specific horns to be tied to specific crimes and has great potential to be effective in strengthening the evidence against and prosecuting poachers.

### **2. Make greater use of technology.**

Poachers are making use of the latest technology, from ammunition to night-vision goggles and more, to take Africa's rhinos. Increased use of advance technologies can help improve protection of rhinos. Of greatest emphasis:

- Support the use of horn implants that track rhino movement and signal horn removal
- Provide equipment for nighttime anti-poaching efforts, including thermal imaging technology, night-vision goggles, and guard dogs
- Implement security and intelligence analysis software to analyze trends in poaching. (Analysis has found, for example, that rhino poaching tends to increase during a full moon.)
- Install surveillance cameras around property perimeters and location alarms on fences to provide additional security and act as a deterrent to poachers
- Undertake systematic monitoring and survey of rhino populations through the use of tracking technologies

### **3. Put more, and better-trained, boots on the ground.**

Strong protection forces on the ground are a must. Case studies of Asian rhino protection in certain national parks in Asia has demonstrated that the more trained and properly equipped anti-poaching staff there is in the field, the lower the rates of poaching.

Many African nations have indigenous knowledge on paramilitary training and operations, and many more are successfully implementing these techniques on the ground. Specifically, South Africa, Namibia, and Kenya have strong on-site protection programs. These governments in particular are asked to share their knowledge with other nations, such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania, that need additional support in this area. A number of private security companies and organizations, which have expertise in some of these areas, can be used to assist governments.

In the same vein, we recommend a more rigorous system, which includes a criminal background check, be developed for selecting scouts and ranger staff.

### **4. Provide greater support for rangers.**

Rangers in the field have the most difficult and dangerous job of anyone involved in rhino protection. Every day, men and women put their lives on the line in the protection of rhinos—but often, due to limited resources, these rangers are put into the field with little

to no followup support. These individuals must receive appropriate training, serviceable arms with adequate ammunition, and sufficient communications equipment.

They also need to be appropriately recompensed to build morale and motivation.

Finally, some stakeholders have found that the use of performance management systems and software allow for continued development of personnel but also help improve morale because rangers are being evaluated on specific, objective criteria.

## **Security and Law Enforcement**

### **1. Improve intelligence gathering through strong coordination between countries.**

Countries can learn from each other on on-site protection methods that are working, share intelligence information, and seal exit points for rhino horn. Stakeholders from the Rhino Summit recommend that each of the rhino range states nominate a key individual at the national level to receive and disseminate information and fulfill actions on the focus areas resolved upon at the Summit. These country representatives will become the entry and departure points for range state communications and project support.

Stakeholders from the Summit will assist in facilitating such an international forum among the range states.

### **2. Prosecute rhino poaching and horn trafficking as an organized crime.**

Rhino poaching has been closely tied to organized crime. South Africa has made great progress in identifying syndicates that are driving rhino poaching in the country and has been successful in tying rhino poaching to laws relating to organized crime. This has allowed the use of highly punitive laws that provides for asset attachment, huge fines, and long sentences.

Other African countries need to find ways to use existing laws that will treat poaching as a serious-enough crime to act as a deterrent. Attendees at this Summit urge that legal systems within each rhino range state consider applying immigration, tax, customs, and other laws for prosecution. Where applicable, laws should be amended or enacted, which will allow stricter penalties that act as a true deterrent to rhino poaching and rhino horn trafficking.

On a longer-term scale, stakeholders believe laws across the rhino range states should be amended to include key terms such as “racketeering” and “conspiracy” in anti-poaching legislation, which will allow for rhino poaching or the intent to poach rhino to be prosecuted as organized crimes. Amended legislation can also be used to apply immigration, tax, customs, and other laws for prosecution.

Laws related to wildlife offenses should also be amended where necessary to:

- Enable the use of forensic methods, including DNA identification, as legal evidence
- Enable the use of hearsay in certain circumstances to be used for arrest
- Provide a government's appropriate minister to define certain categories as more egregious and therefore include higher penalties, which may allow countries to adjust to poaching trends more readily
- Provide rangers and wildlife personnel at the field level clear, unambiguous authority and legal protection in the form of self-defense should engagement occur with poachers during the course of anti-poaching work

### **3. Promote interagency cooperation between national bodies.**

Interagency cooperation between national bodies, such as wildlife departments, customs, police, and security special units, should be improved to enable both rapid "crisis response" actions and coordinated law enforcement to address poaching and trafficking.

### **4. Urge governments to take stock of and properly catalog their rhino horn stockpiles to safeguard against illegally obtained horn.**

Nations must maintain comprehensive records of their rhino horn stockpiles. When rhino horn appears on the market or elsewhere, then, rhino range states can then track whether the horn came from a recently poached rhino or a government's stockpile.

## **Rhino Horn Demand and Illegal Trade**

### **1. Commission studies to better understand the drivers of the illegal rhino horn trade.**

The demand drivers of illegal rhino horn trade are little understood. There is an urgent need to undertake trade surveys in Asia where active rhino horn trade and consumption are known or suspected (e.g. China, Vietnam, and Thailand). The information needed includes:

- Sources and transport routes to supply Asian hotspot markets
- Prices of horn (USD/kg) at source in Africa and wholesale and retail in various Asian markets
- Processing locales and methods of horn consumption
- Socio-economic profiles of those involved in wholesale trading and/or processing and retail sale
- Details on the uses of rhino horn, including associated cultural beliefs
- Socio-economic profiles of rhino horn consumers

### **2. Drive down rhino horn demand through a sustained public awareness campaign.**

Certain NGOs have been successful in conducting public awareness campaigns in China and Taiwan to reduce demand for shark fin and other endangered wildlife. Similar

campaigns need to be implemented to educate current and potential consumers within suspected demand countries in Asia of the rhino horn trade. The campaign may address the effects of horn consumption on rhino, stressing the ethical and conservation issues involved; work to debunk the medical myths associated with rhino horn consumption; and attempt to create stigma around the consumption of rhino horn products.

## **Policy Outreach**

- 1. Appoint a Special Envoy for Rhino Conservation to bring attention to the rhino crisis.**

African range state countries should approach the UN Environmental Programme to appoint a UN Special Envoy for Rhino Conservation.

- 2. Increase diplomatic engagement between range states and consuming countries.**

Countries throughout Africa are increasingly involved economically with Asian countries, such as China, but the illegal rhino horn trade is currently affecting the economic stability of both nations. Range states must therefore positively and actively engage diplomatically with embassies and consulates of key consuming countries, to request their assistance in law enforcement, prosecutions, and public awareness.