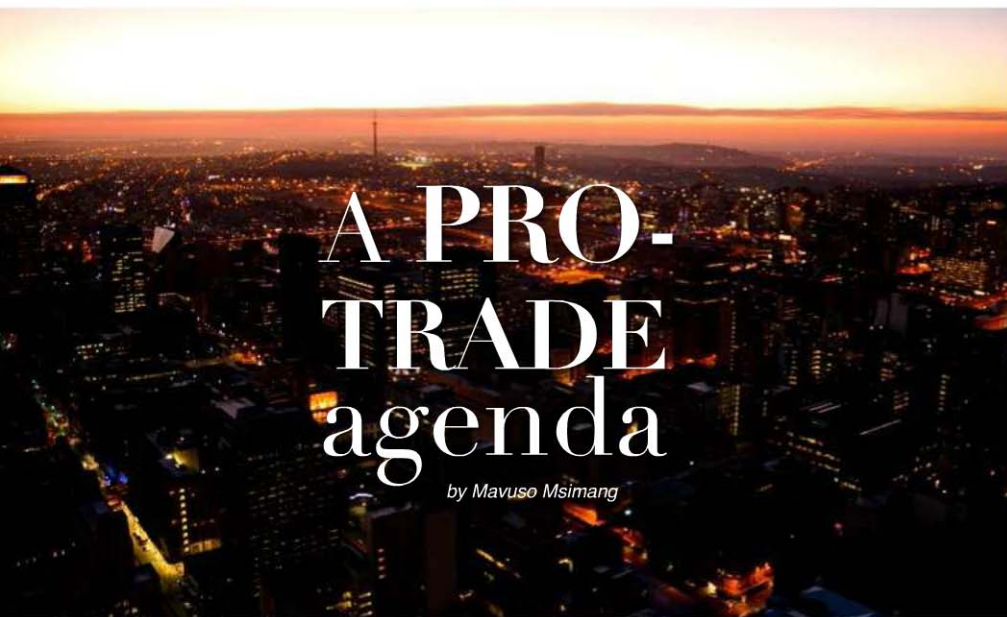




MAVUSO MSIMANG

Mavuso Msimang was formerly CEO of SANParks for six years and retains his interest in nature conservation, serving on the boards of organisations such as the isiMangaliso Wetland Park in KwaZulu-Natal, WWF South Africa, the Peace Parks Foundation and African Parks. He is currently SANParks' rhino conservation issue manager. He holds a BSc in entymology.

For more information, visit: <http://www.tambofoundation.org.za/trustees>



A PRO-TRADE agenda

by Mavuso Msimang

THE 17TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (CoP) WILL TAKE PLACE IN JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA FROM 24 SEPTEMBER TO 5 OCTOBER 2016 AND WILL BRING THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO TACKLE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WILDLIFE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Photo by Africanmoose.



The ban on the trade in rhino horn was instituted in 1977 and yet, 38 years later, it is very clear that the objective of the ban – that is, to save the rhino from being hunted for its horn – has been unsuccessful. Year after year, there has been a serious escalation in rhino poaching, in spite of the South African government and others involved in protecting the species doing everything they can to put a stop to it. The justice system, the police, and the courts have all been aligned as never before in South Africa, to make sure that anyone who is caught killing rhino illegally is successfully prosecuted and punished, but even this has not been enough to stop poaching.

I am convinced that neighbouring communities are the vital link in the war against rhino poaching. When I took over as CEO for SA National Parks (SANParks) in 1997, the hostility between the people that live in these communities and the Kruger

National Park was terrible. We started a programme that was meant to create an interest in the value of KNP to these residents by encouraging them to grow things that they could sell to the restaurants in KNP and be trained in road construction and maintenance.





Communities have traditionally attached a very strong value to wildlife. For example, they called a buffalo 'nyati', a totem for them, which they respect and look after in a particular way.

If we do bring back the element of community involvement, we are actually helping people recall their traditional practices and values in a harmonious relationship with wildlife, contributing tremendously to saving many species, particularly the rhino.

A legal trade in rhino horn (in which not a single animal would need to be killed) would enable the government to free up substantial funding for many other conservation priorities as rhinos would have a real value and pay for their own security.





"A new generation of people who care for rhinos, wildlife and wilderness are now taking over the baton."

Dr. Ian Player



environment & tourism

Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



THE LATE DR IAN PLAYER.

The logical extension of this is to encourage communities to set aside a suitable area of land where they can start making money from rhinos by breeding and selling them, eventually harvesting the rhino horn on a regular basis with the expectation that there will be opportunities for a legal trade in the horn.

Although I am not a hunter myself, I am the first to appreciate the very important role that hunters have played in this country to set aside considerable areas of land for wildlife, in the process generating substantial funding for the conservation of biodiversity and providing thousands of jobs. Other countries need to appreciate that the private sector in South Africa is responsible for looking after about almost 40% of the country's rhinos – a total that exceeds the combined rhino population in the rest of Africa. We are committed to consumptive use; in other words, we should let our wildlife 'wash its own face'.

When the private sector was allowed to own rhino and sell them as live rhino, you saw people realising the value of keeping these animals.

Unfortunately, it has become extremely expensive to protect these animals now, and many of the private landowners are questioning whether or not to keep them as they have become a liability and not an asset.



We are committed to consumptive use; in other words, we should let our wildlife 'wash its own face'.



It is about time the outside world gave South Africa credit for its outstanding track record in rhino conservation, as pioneered by the late Dr Ian Player, and the vitally important role played by the private landowners.

I do hope that South Africa will be bold enough to ask for legalisation of trade in rhino horn at CITES CoP17, thus telling the outside world that we respect the value of rhinos, as do the majority of private landowners who have invested in

rhino conservation. It is really important to me that, although South Africa may seem to be a developed country relative to others on the continent, it nevertheless has many people living in poverty. A major priority for our government is to address this concern through job creation, improved education and health facilities, and a renewed commitment to tackling the damaging and escalating service-delivery protests. Against this background, the conservation of iconic species will not be a priority for the allocation of government funding. A legal trade in rhino horn (in which not a single animal would need to be killed) would enable the government to free up substantial funding for many other conservation priorities as rhinos would have a real value and pay for their own security.

The late Dr Ian Player, who made such an outstanding contribution to building up the numbers of southern white rhino, was a staunch advocate of the need for a legal trade in rhino horn as an essential component for the future security of the species, an opinion deserving recognition and support above all others.