

APPENDIX 1:

LETTER TO PRESIDENT ZUMA – J.G. du Toit

Dear President Zuma,

We need you to help to conserve our rhinoceros population. You will in the future be known as either the president who was responsible for the survival of the rhinoceros or for the extinction of the species.

Your forefathers (Tshaka and Dingane) conserved the last rhinoceros in northern Zululand. This remnant population was saved from extinction by the former Natal Parks Board. South Africa has some 20 000 rhinoceroses (18 000 white and 2 000 black) which, theoretically, could sustain annually an illegal hunting off-take of about 6% (1 200 animals) of the population. If the trend in numbers hunted illegally continues at its present rate this threshold will be exceeded in 2013. According to the model built on the current poaching trends by Rowan Martin, a well-respected biologist from Zimbabwe, the South African rhinoceros population will be extinct by 2024.

My plea to you, Mr. President, is that you will send in 2013 a well-motivated delegation to the next CITES meeting to make a proposal to the world to consider the legal trade in rhinoceros horn. Delaying the submission of a proposal for a legal trade in rhinoceros horn from 2013 to 2016 will result in an additional cost of **US\$ 996 million** (R7.5 billion) arising from the continuing loss of rhinoceros (1 300 animals) between 2013 and 2016. More than 260 poachers will be killed that will further aggravate poverty in the communities.

Historically poaching accounted for 0.1% of the rhinoceros population in South Africa. During 2006 the hunting system was abused to deliver horn to the medicinal market. The justification is to “farm with horn” and not to stop the poaching. The horn production of a rhinoceros cow is two kg every two years. A farmer will receive on average R300 000 every two years from a cow. **The land-use value of rhinoceros managed under dehorning is at least 100 times greater than that of domestic livestock.**

Should the Department of Environmental Affairs elect not to submit a proposal to the next CITES COP (March 2013), it should be answerable to the nation for this huge loss in income. This is another factor that should influence the decision whether or not to submit a proposal for legal trade to the coming CITES COP. South Africa must approach the CITES Parties with the argument that, despite a massive commitment to law enforcement, losses are escalating and it needs the legal trade to ensure that the losses do not become unsustainable. What can we lose by trying, Mr. President? SA will be seen as a Party which, despite its past conservation record, has now allowed illegal hunting to get out of control and cannot be trusted to implement a legal trade effectively.

The performance of our law enforcement is as follows: The loss increased from 1 rhinoceros every 4 days in 2008 to 1 rhinoceros every 3 days in 2009 and to 1 rhinoceros every day in 2010. Therefore, to think that SA will win the battle against poaching is naive.

By any objective measurement the CITES ban on trade in rhinoceros horn has failed to prevent rhinoceros poaching. During the 32 years that the trade ban has been in place the international conservation community has probably spent in excess of \$100 million to save the rhinoceros. Yet during that time at least 12 countries in Africa have lost their rhinoceros populations. The African black rhinoceros population has declined from 65 000 to about 3000. These figures are flattered by the recovery of rhinoceros populations in South Africa and Namibia, and the real comparison is that African rhinoceros populations outside of these two countries have declined to fewer than 1 000 animals in 2009.

Economics: At the current price in South Africa the legal harvest of horn from 15% of the white rhinoceros population would yield R150 000 000 per annum (about US \$20 million), which far exceeds the amount currently spent on rhinoceros protection and conservation from all sources, nationally and internationally. The South African rhinoceros population has the capacity to produce more horn than has been factored into the above arguments. This could be expected to have an impact on the prices realised in the market place. Even if the price falls by a factor of ten, however, it would still be worthwhile for rhinoceros owners to harvest and sell the horn. Economics would then dictate that poaching, which should then be an even higher risk enterprise than it is at the present time, would no longer be worthwhile. The value currently captured by middlemen would be retained by the producers and the consumers.

Biological issues: It has been argued that a rhinoceros with its anterior horn reduced to a stub would be vulnerable to predators, and that cows could not defend their calves. This, mostly, does not apply to rhinoceros on private land in South Africa where there are very few large predators. Previous surveys have not recorded any mortalities due to predation, but the current survey lists five immature white rhinoceroses killed by lions. A larger percentage of mortalities, was due to rhinoceroses being killed by adult male rhinoceros, however, and this figure might be reduced if horns are removed. It is also possible that a rhinoceros with a horn stub may be more vulnerable to a rhinoceros with a full horn in any social conflict. While there is no indication that rhinoceroses are in any way inconvenienced by having their horns docked, there may be unexpected social consequences.

Comparisons with the ivory ban: Some conservationists argue that the CITES ban on the trade in elephant *Loxodonta africana* tusks has been successful, yet recent media reports speak of a resurgence in elephant poaching. Nonetheless, they argue that a continued trade ban on rhinoceros horn would achieve the same success if diligently applied. The fundamental difference is that there are still large numbers of elephants, most living outside formally protected areas, and that main market for the curios produced from ivory is in the West. The main use of rhinoceros horn is in traditional Chinese medicines. It is a cultural use by people not reachable by the dramatic public hysteria of the mainstream conservation NGOs of the West. Chinese use small quantities of rhinoceros horn in medicines not because they are perverse and want to destroy rhinoceroses, but because they believe in its efficacy, and

have done so for several thousand years. Furthermore, if rhinoceros horn can be produced in sufficient quantities to satisfy the demand for it, at no risk to the life of the rhinoceros, there would seem to be little logic in trying to ban its use. The consequence of consigning the rhinoceros horn trade to criminals is the decline of the rhinoceros populations. The consequence of allowing the owners of the rhinoceros to trade in harvested horn will be more investment in rhinoceros protection and more habitat for rhinoceros.

The question of whether a legal trade in African rhinoceros horn (initially only white rhinoceros, but in time black rhinoceros as well) would be detrimental to the conservation of Asian rhinoceroses does require serious attention. It is well known that African and Asian rhinoceros horns are easily distinguishable and that the price for Asian horn is many times higher than for African horn. Law enforcement need not, therefore, be compromised by legalising African horn.

Rhinoceros horn stockpiles: It has been postulated that the current size of the rhinoceros horn stockpile owned by the private sector is about 3000 kg, while State institutions hold 12 000 kg of rhinoceros horn. At the current price of R150 000 per kg in South Africa these stockpiles are worth R2.3 billion. Most of the private owners of rhinoceros horn would like to sell their rhinoceros horn; the view of the State has not been canvassed. Clearly, however, the legal sale of rhinoceros horn has the potential to generate significant revenue for the individuals and organisations protecting most of the world's white rhinoceroses and black rhinoceroses.

“Rhinoceros face a grave crisis and those who purport to hold the survival of the five species above everything else must be prepared to examine all available options with open minds and a will to seek lasting solutions.....including acceptance of the possibility that restricted avenues of trade may be part of the solution.”

Incorporating DNA profiles of animals into the Database: Recent work on the DNA of white rhinoceros carried out by the Onderstepoort Veterinary Genetic Laboratory in Pretoria shows that an accurate match of rhinoceros horn to blood or tissue samples can be achieved. This can provide strong evidence in a court of law. It has been suggested, therefore, that a DNA profile of all white rhinoceroses should be kept as part of the database. In the event of any dispute regarding the origin of horns, or the need for forensic matching of horns to a particular animal, this can then easily be done. The profile of the specific animal can be kept on the database together with its other details and these can then be matched with poached horn.

With an audit system in place and the system being audited by removing illegal activities, a proposal how to legalize the trade and ranching with horn must be taken to Cites at COP in 2013. The philosophy to KEEP OUR RHINOS ALIVE is the major key for the survival of the species. The rhinoceros is a world heritage and South Africans are only custodians of these species. All world citizens must take hands and pool their resources to achieve this philosophy.