

DRAFTING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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Editors summary

Mr. Khan started reviewing the progress made so far in the field of Rhino conservation. There is currently more information available on the status of the rhino in India than in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the Great one-horned Indian rhinoceros must also be included in the discussions. Mr. Khan preferred the use of the word 'recommendation' to 'resolution' as it was less controversial. Three meetings were held up to now (Thailand, Malaysia & Singapore). Since then, substantial progress had been made but much still remains to be done. The Indian rhino seems to be doing well in India and Nepal as a result of efficient management and effective protective measures. Nevertheless, poaching still remains a problem. On the other hand, serious problems are faced by the Javan and Sumatran rhinos, which are listed as being endangered in the IUCN Red Data Book. He then went on to outline the steps that need to be taken in the future :

1. Mr. Khan reiterated the need to prepare Action Plans for the three species of rhino in Asia to consider both their *in situ* as well as *ex situ* conservation.
2. Establishment of reserves in areas where the rhinos currently occur is essential. However, it is not often easy to appropriate land for wildlife conservation in the face of growing human population and its aspirations. It would therefore be naive to expect the Government to set aside enormous areas solely for the purpose of wildlife conservation. But every effort must be taken to set aside as much as possible while there is still time and land. Serious consideration must be given to the possibility of making multi-purpose reserves to accommodate both forestry and wildlife conservation. In Peninsular Malaysia, once the Government allows the Wildlife Conservation Department to take charge of an area of forest, then the responsibility for managing that area falls on the Department itself and so no other land-use (e.g. logging) can ever be practised. This is the reason why the Government more often than not is very reluctant to allocate large areas of forest land to Wildlife Conservation!

3. Due consideration must be given to the captive breeding programme and appropriate recommendations should be made at this forum. Initial setbacks should not deter our commitment. e.g: In Malaysia there had been considerable opposition to the establishment of a captive breeding programme in Sabah. On the otherhand, substantial progress had been made in this field in Indonesia through a collaborative programme with the Howletts and Port Lympne Zoo Park (UK). So far, five animals had been captured in Sumatra and in Peninsular Malaysia, five more had been caught. Plans are afoot for the capture of more rhinos that are "doomed". It is hoped that in time there would be sufficient number of rhinos in captivity for breeding them in zoos in Indonesia, Malaysia, England and America. The Chairman recommended that the Singapore Proposals be endorsed at this meeting with some modifications.

MANAN : pointed out that like in Malaysia, there were considerable problems in Indonesia too for wildlife conservation. Fortunately however, there was still more land available in Sumatra than in Peninsular Malaysia to set aside for conservation. Already Sumatra has a number of large National Parks such as the Gunung Leuser, Kerinci-Seblat, Barisan Selatan etc. where the Sumatran rhino occurs. But what was needed were efficient management and effective anti-poaching measures in Sumatra. He also referred to the importance of establishing buffer zones around the reserves and national parks. On the matter of captive breeding, he made a special mention of the successful tie-up between Indonesia and the Howletts Zoo, but added that a good follow up was needed especially in the field of staff training, transfer of technology and know-how. He hoped that International organizations such as IUCN and WWF too would extend their help and assistance. There was a need to clarify the status of the rhino in Kalimantan and so he urged that more surveys be carried out there. He then addressed the important aspect of what constitutes a "doomed" population. He asked for an exact definition of what a "doomed" population was? Torgamba, has already been allocated for conversion to oil-palm plantations and so the removal of the rhinos from this forest was both necessary and justified.

ANDAU : pointed out that in the State of Sabah, there had been much progress made so far in habitat protection. Wildlife reserves were legally gazetted. The most serious problems were those concerning the extension of wildlife reserves, and increasing the manpower resources which were essential to carry out ground surveys and combat poaching. He recommended that further surveys be carried out jointly by Malaysians and Indonesians to assess the situation of the rhino across the Sabah/Kalimantan border.

SINGHAPANT : mentioned that very little was known about the rhino in Thailand. He added that it was unlikely that the animal still survives in Thailand. Nevertheless, he recommended that surveys be carried out especially along the western and southern borders of the country where, if at all, some rhinos were likely to wander in from Burma or Malaysia. There were definite plans to set up trans-border reserves between Thailand, Burma

and Malaysia. He expressed the hope that a male rhino could be obtained to start the captive breeding programme in Thailand, in view of the fact that there were already nine animals in captivity.

FOOSE : handed out copies of the Singapore proposals for consideration and endorsement, subject to any modifications recommended by the House. He suggested that each of the species of rhino be considered separately, and in the case of the Javan rhino, he hoped that there would be some recommendations on what actions that need to be taken. The Singapore proposals provided a good framework. He then referred to the item 3 in the proposals, as one that needed modification. The situation, he added had changed since 1984, when the proposals were drafted; therefore, instead of having a paid "coordinator", the "development and oversight of the Master Plan will be the responsibility of the SSC/ARSG". Dr. Foose suggested that this statement would replace the item 3. He added that ARSG could appoint a sub committee to discuss this matter.

WIDODO : agreed with Dr. Foose that ARSG could take care of the job rather than a "paid coordinator". He also made reference to his earlier comments on the Javan rhino and urged that more attention be given to studying such aspects as changes (if any) in the number of rhino over time, habitat condition, carrying capacity of Ujung Kulon itself etc. While the Singapore proposals were comprehensive and useful, Mr. Widodo was concerned how they could be effectively implemented.

MANAN : agreed that item 3 in the Singapore proposals ought to be modified. He added that the implementation of the proposals was based on a bilateral agreement between Howletts & Port Lympne Zoo Park and Indonesia.

RUBINI : looked back to the time when Indonesia was developing a cooperative agreement with the Howletts & Port Lympne Zoo Park (HPLZP). At that time the proposals were drafted to determine what should be done (or what should not be done!) about the breeding of Sumatran rhino in captivity. He added, "For reasons of practicality, the agreement was made between Indonesia and HPLZP in such a way that the two parties should be seen clearly to be in the programme". He further added, "the involvement of the IUCN in this respect is implied in this agreement and therefore it is redundant to mention IUCN in all the clauses". It was therefore understood that IUCN was involved and so he suggested that the item 3 should be "streamlined".

KHAN : suggested that the item 3 should be changed in the Singapore proposals to read, "Development and oversight of the Masterplan will be the responsibility of the SSC/Asian Rhino Specialist Group". The rest must be deleted.

The House endorsed this change.

FOOSE : referred to item 5 (f) in the Singapore proposals and suggested likewise that it be modified to replace "coordinator and advisory groups" with "SSC/ARSG".

RUBINI : wanted the priorities in item 4 altered: 4 (a) should be given a lower priority than 4 (b). Therefore in the revised proposals, 4 (a) = old 4 (b); and 4 (b) = 4 (a).

MECKVICHAI : referred to item 5 (e) in the Singapore proposals and requested that Thailand be mentioned as a country of origin for the rhino.

FOOSE: suggested that the phrase, "among others, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand" be inserted in item 5 (e) following "countries of origin".

RUBINI : took up the question of "doomed" rhinos. He wanted to know who would decide (and on what basis) that a population of rhino is "doomed" ?

KHAN : saw no problems on this matter since it was up to the Wildlife Department to decide what animals were "doomed". For example, he took the case of Sungai Dusun: it is 10,400 acres in extent, but surrounded by huge oil palm plantations, towns and roads etc. Rhinos are known to wander in and out of oil palm plantations and rice fields. Therefore a decision was made by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks to capture these animals on the basis of an assessment of the situation then made. 4 animals were caught and more remain to be captured in this area where the animals are doomed. He also mentioned that logged over forest was not a bad habitat for rhino.

NARDELLI : stressed the importance of determining what the "doomed" populations are, at this meeting.

FOOSE : referred to the Singapore meeting in 1984 and suggested that identifying doomed populations ought to be done on a rational basis and should take into account :

- (a) the immediate threats to the habitat,
- (b) the immediate threats to the animal,
- (c) an assessment of the long term prospects of the area,
- (d) its capacity to support viable populations for the long term.

He stressed the need to arrive at a clear definition of what constituted a "doomed" population, in terms of habitat size or threat. This he added, was an important aspect of the Global Action Plan that should be developed so that doomed populations could be identified. The primary responsibility rests with the Government of the country but the SSC/ARSG must provide guidelines, advice and oversight. He recommended the appointment of a sub-committee to develop a Master Plan.

KHAN : mentioned that the problem of "doomed" populations was a more important issue at this meeting than the Master Plan. He added that the Governments must have flexibility. ARSG could develop the Master Plan when necessary, but he agreed on the appointment of a sub-committee for this purpose should this become essential. The priority was to define "doomed" populations and he therefore asked that a sub-committee be formed to deal with this issue.

FOOSE : volunteered to be involved in this sub-committee, and the names of Raleigh Blouch (WWF) and S.R. Widodo (PHPA) were added. Foose wanted the matter settled within a month, while Nardelli and Rubini wanted the matter resolved then and there.

BLOUCH : cautioned that the preparation of the final document should be given sufficient time and consideration and therefore should not be rushed. In the interim however, a rough draft could be prepared as a guideline.

MANAN : pointed out that item 5 (a) in the Singapore proposals was in any case flexible, but added that it should be refined constantly. He suggested inclusion of the phrase, "subject to Government approval" in item 5 (a).

WIDODO : referring to "doomed" populations, advised against rushing into quick decisions without proper consideration of all the factors. The situation according to him was likely to change, since no condition was permanent. The concept of carrying capacity is a complex issue. More studies are needed *before* a population is declared "doomed". He therefore recommended seeking the advice of Dr. Schenkel who is an authority on the rhino. He further added that in general most Governments had good policies to conserve wildlife. Torgamba was a case in point. In respect of other areas, he said it would be difficult to identify the "doomed" populations themselves. He agreed with Dr. Foose that proper guidelines should be given for deciding what populations without prior studies.

NARDELLI : pointed out that the purpose was to suggest the factors that could aid in the formulation of a definition of "doomed" populations and not to identify the populations themselves. He agreed with Dr. Foose that proper guidelines should be given for deciding what populations were doomed.

WIDODO : feared that once the habitat was doomed, simply labelling the rhino population within as "doomed" would not in itself be enough. So far, he added that no one had ever suggested as to how such "doomed" populations could be salvaged to let them survive in the wild. Something must be done to save the animals and enhance their chances of survival in these areas rather than simply removing them for breeding in captivity.

ANDAU : mentioned that in the long run, the final decision rested with the Government. It must be very flexible to take into consideration the local conditions and enable the Government to act rationally. He doubted if Governments had any deliberate policy to abuse the loopholes (if any) in the agreement, and would go against the conservation ethics. He therefore recommended that only guidelines be formulated.

KHAN : pointed out that the item 5 (a) in the Singapore proposals already provided a useful general framework. He added that the general guidelines were preferable to specific recommendations. The sub-committee would look into the specifics.

RUBINI : summed up the mood and indicated that the word "doomed" be left as it was for the time being !

THE CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

KHAN : first considered the case of the Sumatran rhino in Indonesia. The animal is found in the National Parks such as Gunung Leuser, Kerinci-Seblat, and Barisan Selatan. It also occurs in the Torgamba production forest and in Kalimantan (north of Kutai National Park), and other areas.

RUBINI : recommended a consideration of the species and its attributes in a logical sequence such as :

1. its geographical distribution in Sumatra,
2. status of the habitats where the animal occurs,
3. conservation programmes (Singapore Proposals format: training, *in situ* & *ex situ* measures)
4. aspects concerning international cooperation

KHAN : considered first the geographical distribution of the Sumatran rhino in Indonesia. The animal occurs in Gunung Leuser, north of Gunung Leuser, Kerinci-Seblat, Torgamba, Gunung Patah, Gunung Rajamandara, and Barisan Selatan. Conservation actions are :

1. continued protection and monitoring of the populations,
2. improved management of parks and reserves
3. development and management of buffer zones
4. proper funding from both local and international agencies
5. initiating and conducting regular surveys of the reserves (at least once a year).

Kerinci-Seblat National Park is listed in the ASEAN Heritage Areas. Action needed :

1. study of the distribution and number of rhino,
2. strengthen its status as a National Park,
3. carry out regular surveys once a year,
4. give high priority to funding and seek international assistance.

WIDODO : pointed out that the southern part of the Barisan Selatan National Park in southern Sumatra was an ideal habitat for the rhino, and so needed more investment (in terms of increased manpower and finance), to bring about a more efficient management. He was confident that with proper management, the rhino numbers would increase.

ROEDJAI : interjected with the query whether it would be possible to alter the status of Torgamba Production forest to that of a Protection forest ?

KHAN : "Surveys are needed to confirm the presence of rhino especially in the Batu Muda Catchment area north of Kutai National Park, where some animals are supposed to be present. Surveys are also needed in Sarawak/Kalimantan border areas to determine the status of the rhino. Kutai National Park itself needs a re-assessment to determine the status of the rhino"

SINGHAPANT : In Thailand, rhino may be present in the following areas :

1. Huay Kha Khaeng near the Burma border,
2. Thung Yai,
3. Belum in the south, along the Malaysian border

"Surveys are needed to ascertain if rhino is present in (1) and (2). In respect of (3), there is evidence that Sumatran rhino survives here. Improved protection is needed and continued monitoring is planned. This area has a high priority and so it will be declared a reserve soon. Funds are needed but from where will they come ?"

KHAN : He referred to the possible localities in Burma where the Sumatran rhino was likely to occur. He added that very little information was available to help formulate any meaningful management policies.

KHAN : as far as Indochina was concerned, he referred to the report prepared by Dr. John MacKinnon concerning the presence of 4-5 Javan rhino in Vietnam. He added that a survey was urgently needed here in order to get more information.

KHAN : Concerning the situation in India, he recollected that in 1979, there was a decision to re-introduce a number of Indian rhino to its former habitats in India. This was subsequently carried out successfully in the Dudhwa National Park. Nevertheless poaching still remains a serious problem in India, where according to a recent WWF report, about 223 animals were killed between 1982 - 1985.

DISCUSSION ON CAPTIVE BREEDING

BLOUCH pointed out that in the 30,000 ha Torgamba Production forest there were about 10 Sumatran rhino. He recommended that the capture operations be moved to another area. Answering Ir. Roedjai's query whether the status of Torgamba could be changed to Protection forest, he replied that Torgamba would be unsuitable in any case as a reserve. He added that the Barakas Goodwin Timber area just north west of Torgamba could be a possible area for future capture operations. Since 1984, there had been no information about rhino from this area. But prior to that date, rhino were killed there.

NARDELLI : urged that the advice given by Mr. Blouch be heeded and capture operations be shifted to a new area.

RUBINI : mentioned that more objective surveys were needed, and added that such surveys were better carried out by WWF in association with the Forestry personnel. He recognised the need to obtain both funds and expertise from International agencies such as IUCN, WWF and from Howletts & Port Lympne Zoo Park (HPLZP). He recommended that HPLZP continued their operations in Riau province while the AAZPA (if and when they participated in the programme) concentrated on other

areas in Sumatra.

NARDELLI : pointed out that logging still went on in the Barakas Goodwin Timber area (50,000 ha) where a large net work of roads had been created. He added that surveys were needed before recommendations could be made.

FOOSE : mentioned the need to agree on the number of animals needed for the captive breeding programme. He then suggested a figure of 30 individuals (15 pairs) as the minimum needed. Of the 15 pairs, 3 pairs would be in Malaysia, 4 pairs in Indonesia, 1 pair in Thailand, 2 pairs in the UK and the rest (5 pairs) in USA.

WIDODO : pointed out that there would be mortality associated with the capture of these "minimum" number of 30 rhinos and so in effect perhaps 40 must be captured to get this minimum number, making allowance for any losses during the operations. Furthermore, he added that the sex ratio might be unbalanced, so that much more than 30 animals would have to be captured in order to get the balanced sex ratio. He recommended a conservative number - say 10 pairs - as being adequate for the captive breeding programme.

BLOUCH : agreed with Mr. Andau that it was better to leave the number flexible. The number would depend on the availability of "doomed" areas and it should not be simply a target to be met by capturing rhinos anywhere.

RUBINI : recommended that the decision to capture some Javan rhino for either breeding in captivity or translocation to a second home be postponed to a later date. He hoped that IUCN would cooperate with Indonesia in carrying out more research.

NARDELLI : also emphasised the need for research in Ujung Kulon, particularly in determining if there was any serious competition between the banteng and the rhino. He was optimistic that funds could be made available.