

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



Fifty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 14-18 July 2008

Interpretation and implementation of the Convention

Species trade and conservation

RHINOCEROSSES

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.*

Related activities

3. In relation to Decision 14.89, paragraph a), the Secretariat has welcomed work by TRAFFIC, which has prepared a draft format for the declarations referred to. The Secretariat is consulting the African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups regarding the draft. If they approve the draft, it will be distributed by the Secretariat.
4. In relation to Decision 14.90, paragraph b), the Secretariat has made contact with the Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention and is discussing how best to implement this Decision, which countries should be invited to participate in training and what format such capacity building should take. The Secretariat believes there is considerable scope for the activities called for in the Decision to be combined with capacity building that will be undertaken as part of the MIKE programme, since poaching of and illegal trade in elephant and rhinoceros have many similarities, require similar responses and many of the countries that will be selected for training are range States of both species. A combined approach to capacity building for some elephant and rhinoceros range States will also seek to address the issue in Decision 14.90, paragraph c). Additionally, the MIKE Technical Advisory Group at its recent meeting (Entebbe, March 2008) recommended that the data collection processes and databases that are currently used in MIKE sites be modified in relevant range States so that they can cater for information on other species, including rhinoceroses.

Poaching of and illegal trade in rhinoceros

5. The Secretariat has, for some time, been concerned by reports that indicated what seemed to be increased illegal trade in rhinoceros horn and had begun to examine this subject before Decision 14.90, paragraph a) was adopted. It noted that some of this trade appeared to involve horns that had been obtained as a result of legal trophy hunting but where horns had subsequently been used for commercial purposes.
6. To help raise awareness of this subject, to provide information regarding current illegal trade trends, and to offer a range of advice as to how such trade might be investigated and combated, the Secretariat issued a detailed Alert in February 2008 devoted to illegal trade in rhinoceros.
7. In late January 2008, during a mission to Nepal regarding another matter, the Secretariat took the opportunity to discuss with local officials the poaching of and illegal trade in rhinoceroses. In recent years, Nepal had been significantly affected by such problems, although its enforcement authorities have also enjoyed some considerable successes in both seizures and arrests. Nepal has taken strict measures to combat poaching and illegal trade and has stressed the importance of involving local communities in anti-poaching activities. Some of these responses seem to offer lessons for other Asian rhinoceros range States and the Secretariat encourages such countries to liaise with Nepal.
8. Enforcement work in Nepal was hampered by the fact that considerable resources, which might previously have been deployed against poachers, was taken up in responding to the civil unrest that affected large parts of the country for much of this decade. It seems that poachers took advantage of this situation and, at the height of the unrest, 38 rhinoceroses were killed in Chitwan National Park. However, in 2007, when civil unrest subsided, only one animal was poached there. The

Secretariat notes that rhinoceros poaching in parts of neighbouring India seems to have increased significantly and that such crimes may simply have been displaced from Nepal rather than being eradicated.

9. Meantime, poaching of rhinoceroses in some parts of Africa appears, in some areas, to be increasing and there also seems to be considerable fraud in some sectors of the legal hunting of rhinoceros. The Secretariat discussed such issues with officials in South Africa and Zimbabwe in April 2008, during missions to these countries in relation to trade in ivory. Both countries are actively engaged in efforts to combat such crimes and South Africa, in particular, has been communicating with the Secretariat on this matter for a considerable period. The two countries came together this year, in a meeting facilitated by TRAFFIC, to discuss poaching and illegal trade incidents that share similarities and that would benefit from joint investigations and the sharing of information. Zimbabwe, towards the end of 2007, adopted an emergency action plan regarding rhinoceros conservation, incorporating a number of specific measures designed to increase law enforcement effectiveness. During its visit to Zimbabwe, the Secretariat met with high-level officials from a variety of police, military, revenue and prosecution agencies that are combining with CITES officials to form a wildlife crime working group. The Secretariat expects that Zimbabwe will be one of the countries that will participate in the capacity-building activities planned under Decision 14.90, paragraph b).
10. Research by non-governmental organizations indicates that illegal trade in rhinoceros horn for traditional dagger handles may have re-emerged in Yemen. However, it appears that most poaching and illicit trade in horns are intended to supply traditional medicine demands in parts of Asia. The Secretariat intends to brief ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network members on this subject at their meeting in May 2008. It hopes to persuade ASEAN-WEN to examine this trade and to work with range States in Africa and Asia, as collaborative efforts will be needed to combat these crimes effectively.

Final remarks and recommendations

11. The Secretariat is convinced that there is a highly-organized nature to much of the poaching and illicit trade in rhinoceros that are currently taking place. Very considerable profits appear to be involved and there are strong grounds to suspect the involvement of money-laundering. It wishes to review the effectiveness of some of the efforts described above but believes that it may be appropriate to convene a seminar or workshop, bringing together enforcement officials from those range and consumer States most affected to enable them to share their experience and information and to facilitate greater networking and collaboration. Alternatively, the Secretariat could, if the Standing Committee agrees, convene a CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force to address this issue. Whichever approach is used, external funding will be required to undertake such activities.
12. The Secretariat is not recommending that it convene a workshop or task force in the immediate future, but seeks the agreement of the Committee to do so should poaching and illegal trade continue to cause concern. The Secretariat would also seek the Committee's endorsement to contact the CITES Management Authority of Yemen seeking an invitation to conduct a mission there to discuss illicit trade in rhinoceros. Again, external funding would be sought for such work.
13. Lastly, the Secretariat reminds Parties that it has negotiated with the wildlife forensic laboratory of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide support in relation to ballistic examinations and evidence. This may be crucial in demonstrating links between poaching incidents, including cross-border incidents, and also in collating evidence that can help convict poachers. The support, and how to access it, is described fully in Alert No. 13 (*International Repository for Ballistic Evidence*).