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IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

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efforts have not been enough to secure this iconic species in its homeland. The fact that we have to move these rhinos to another country as a last resort is an unfortunate set-back, but considering the sharp increase in instability and conflict which has plagued the region for years, it is the only option left.” said Dr Jean-Christophe Vié, acting head of IUCN’s Species Programme.

“The rhino is Garamba’s flagship species yet poaching is affecting a much wider range of animals. The promise to increase in-park conservation efforts is therefore just as critical as the emergency translocation plans to save one species from extinction,” he added.

The only wild northern white rhino population in the world has been conserved for many years in Garamba but an escalation of commercial poaching over the past 18 months has seen numbers plummet from 30 to probably less than 10. This compares with a population of 490 animals 25 years ago. Increased trans-border transgressions from Sudan and the proliferation of arms have made it impossible to secure the area.

“We all regard the plan as a Win-Win outcome,” said Dr Martin Brooks, Chairman of the IUCN/SSC African Rhino Specialist Group, “as support for the World Heritage Site of Garamba National Park will be guaranteed for the future and the northern white rhino has been given its last reprieve from extinction.”

The National Park was inscribed on the prestigious World Heritage List in 1980 following a recommendation from IUCN to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. As well as the northern white rhino, the park’s vast savannahs, grasslands and woodlands are home to many

was chosen as the temporary home.

With the recent approval, a formal accord with the DRC Government has been drafted and is expected to be signed shortly. Planning and recruitment of a team of experts for the operation is now underway in DRC and internationally. In Kenya discussions are underway through the Kenya Wildlife Service to secure the necessary approval and support from the Kenyan authorities.

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**Notes to editors:**

**White rhinoceros**

There are two subspecies of white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*), the northern white rhino (*C. s. cottoni*) and the southern white rhino (*C. s. simum*). The northern white used to inhabit the savannahs of southern Chad, the Central African Republic, southern Sudan, and the far north of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through to western Uganda until the early 1980s. From 2,250 animals in 1960, it has now been reduced, by poaching, to possibly less than 10 individuals in Garamba National Park. Ten animals exist in two zoos in the USA and Czech Republic, but only three are capable of breeding. The zoo population is declining and is not

Centre on the conservation status of World Heritage sites under threat. IUCN's assessments on what is happening in World Heritage sites are derived from a variety of sources: IUCN Regional offices, member organisations, indigenous peoples groups, the scientific community, experts from IUCN commissions and concerned individuals.

### **The deteriorating situation in Garamba National Park**

The Garamba National Park was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1980; but in 1996 it was placed on the danger list because of political instability in DRC and the war in neighbouring Sudan. At the start of the war in DRC in 1997, key animal populations decreased significantly, but after 1998, through increased surveillance efforts, populations remained fairly stable. Unfortunately, in June 2003, the situation deteriorated drastically and the plight of the northern white rhino worsened again in 2004, when a survey indicated only five rhinos in an area which had 19 the previous year. Poachers are predominantly SPLA rebels and ironically, the increase in poaching seems to be connected to the progress in the Sudanese peace talks, resulting in fighters coming back from the front and available for poaching. In response, an emergency strategy was developed by ICCN and its conservation partners. The strategy focuses on re-training and equipping the guard force and taking steps to put pressure on the SPLA to withdraw their fighters from the region.

*International assistance:* Total amount of international assistance provided from the World Heritage Fund to Garamba National Park was US\$ 157,845 for equipment and staff allowances as of June 2004.