

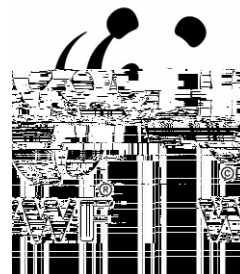
CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Fifty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee
Geneva (Switzerland), 6-10 July 2009

STATUS, CONSERVATION AND TRADE IN AFRICAN AND ASIAN RHINOCEROSSES

The attached document has been prepared by IUCN, TRAFFIC and WWF*, and submitted by the Secretariat.



Status, conservation and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses

**An IUCN, TRAFFIC and WWF Briefing
for the 58th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee, Geneva, July 6-10, 2009**

At the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP14) in June 2007, IUCN and TRAFFIC provided Parties with a report on the status, conservation and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses. In addition, TRAFFIC provided a separate report on rhinoceros-related crimes in Africa, with an overview of poaching, seizure and stockpile data for the period 2000-2005. Both reports painted a rather bleak situation facing particular rhinoceros populations in parts of Africa, with sharp increases in the volume of rhinoceros horn entering illegal trade and poaching most severe in Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The CITES Parties at CoP14 responded by agreeing a series of decisions (i.e. Decisions 14.88-14.90) requiring range States to declare their stocks of rhinoceros horns and examine the implementation of

Africa to CoP14), it is clear that there has been a serious escalation in illegal off-take. In summary, between 2000-2005, 3.5 rhinoceroses were illegally killed each month in all of Africa, but currently in South Africa and Zimbabwe alone, 12.4 rhinoceroses are being poached each month or between two and three rhinoceroses every week.

Illegal rhinoceros horn trade to destinations in Asia is driving this killing, with growing evidence of the ongoing involvement of Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai nationals in the illicit procurement and transport of rhinoceros horn out of Africa. For example, local media in South Africa have presented filmed evidence of the complicity of staff of the Viet Nam Embassy in South Africa in the procurement of illegal rhinoceros horns. Viet Nam was not a major destination for illegal commerce in rhinoceros horn until about five years ago. In that country, ongoing research is uncovering evidence that rhinoceros horns are currently being promoted for medical uses that greatly expand the scope of rhinoceros horn usage as described in the traditional literature, including using the substance to now treat a range of life threatening illnesses, particularly cancers. It is believed that rhinoceros horns illegally leaving southern Africa are moving into or through Thailand, Viet Nam and China, a situation which requires a heightened degree of law enforcement attention and effort.

With respect to Asian rhinoceros populations, a total of 48 rhinoceroses were killed due to poaching from 2005 to mid-2009, with more than 25 poachers apprehended in Nepal's Chitwan National Park alone. In Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park, seven rhinos (out of a population of about 68) were killed due to poaching in 2008, with four rhino already killed by poachers this year. Since January 2009, 10 rhinoceroses have been poached in Assam, India and seven in Nepal. Since carcass detection is always lower than actual numbers in these forested and tall grassland habitats, these figures represent minimum losses. Funds have been provided by TRAFFIC-India to help the government in Assam deal with the issue of rhinoceros poaching. These funds have been used to support anti-poaching activities, undertake trade monitoring, establish informant networks, and conduct seizures. These efforts have resulted in numerous arrests by government authorities, including seizures of rhinoceros horns, ivory, leopard skins, and weapons. In Nepal, WWF has provided funding for anti-poaching and en

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, the proportion of mortalities due to illegal killing has been alarmingly high with 79% of recorded black and white rhinoceros mortalities from January 2003 to June 2006 being attributed to poaching and snaring. Rhinoceros numbers in Zimbabwe are declining, with official statistics supplied to the AfRSG indicating that black rhinoceros numbers declined slightly from the end of 2005 to the end of 2007. As part of the CITES reporting process pursuant to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP14), IUCN/SSC AfRSG is working together with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to review numbers and trends. Indications are that both white and black rhinoceros numbers have continued to decline through 2008, and the implication of this is that poaching losses are likely to have been higher than originally thought, assuming a conservative net underlying annual population growth rate including natural mortalities since 2002. Recorded losses in the Lowveld Conservancies alone over this period number 70 rhinoceroses and reported losses have also been high in the Midlands.

In its report to CoP14, TRAFFIC showed that the rate for illegal rhinoceros horn recovery in Zimbabwe from 2000-2005 was $\leq 13\%$. This was very low compared with other range States. TRAFFIC also noted that Zimbabwe was (along with South Africa) the African range State with the greatest estimated net minimum flow of illegal horns out of the country over the period 2000-2005 and the situation has not improved since then.

This picture of increasing poaching, declining numbers and low levels of effective law enforcement by the Zimbabwean authorities increasingly threatens the success of more than a decade's work of bringing rhinoceros populations in Zimbabwe back up to healthy levels. It is therefore critical that the increased poaching is effectively countered. The relevant Zimbabwean authorities urgently need to review the status and security of rhinoceroses in Zimbabwe and establish the current situation with regard to poaching levels; law enforcement effectiveness; prosecution success; illegal trade levels; the status and trends in Zimbabwe rhinoceros numbers; and the probable impact of poaching on individual rhinoceros populations and the country's overall population through demographic analysis.

With primarily WWF support and some funding from the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), IUCN/SSC AfRSG and TRAFFIC are involved in

time of this writing, only five Parties (China, Germany, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) have submitted rhinoceros horn stock declarations to the CITES Secretariat for transmission to TRAFFIC. It is worth noting that no rhinoceros range States in either Africa or Asia have yet complied with this decision.

Progress on the mandate in CITES Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP 14) to IUCN and TRAFFIC

With funding generously provided by WWF, IUCN and TRAFFIC have begun initial work gathering data and information from a variety of sources on the trade in South Africa, including permits issued for legal export of trophies and information on trade to Asia. A workshop has been conducted in Zimbabwe in preparation for the analysis to be conducted by IUCN and TRAFFIC as mandated under CITES Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP 14).

However, additional funding for the work called for in CITES Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP 14), (and in particular for the preparation of the summary report for CoP15 and analyses and collation of horn stockpile data) has not been forthcoming from any other sources apart from support received for conducting the 2008 AfRSG meeting from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and WWF, a small grant to the IUCN/SSC AfRSG from the IRF towards the cost of mandated reporting to CoP15, and the WWF/IRF support to assist IUCN/SSC AfRSG and TRAFFIC undertake their work with Zimbabwe Authorities. IUCN and TRAFFIC would like to thank the CITES Secretariat for issuing the call for support for this work in March 2009, and would encourage potential donors to respond to this call. In light of the alarmingly dire situation that many rhinoceros populations are facing, it is critical that Parties at CoP15 are provided with an accurate and up-to-date picture of the status, conservation and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses, as well as the factors driving the consumption of rhinoceros horn, so that firm international action can be taken to arrest this immediate threat to rhinoceros populations worldwide.