

Conservation Of and Trade In African and Asian Rhinoceroses (SC53 Doc.19)

53RD MEETING OF THE CITES STANDING COMMITTEE
27TH JUNE – 1ST JULY 2005
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Background

There are five species of rhinoceros, three of which live in Asia (Indian, Javan, Sumatran) and two in Africa (black, white). The white rhino is listed as Near Threatened by the IUCN Red List, the Indian rhino is listed as Endangered, and the three other species are listed as Critically Endangered. All species are listed on Appendix I except for the South African and Swaziland populations of white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) which are on Appendix II.

A CITES resolution in 1994 (Resolution Conf. 9.14) amended in 2004 (CoP13) directed the Standing Committee to pursue actions aimed at reducing illegal trade in rhino horn. This was discussed by Standing Committee in 1999 (SC42 Doc. 10.5), which presented the report of a workshop held in 1998, funded from the CITES Trust Fund and involving participants selected by TRAFFIC, the IUCN African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups, and the CITES Secretariat. The report contained assessments of four indicator systems for monitoring illegal killing of rhinos, with different levels of complexity and reliability. The most thorough and expensive system was recommended, and the Secretariat estimated a cost of US\$85,000 to develop a detailed proposal for establishing the system. The expenditure for this proposal was not approved by the Standing Committee.

Current Document

The document currently submitted, SC53 Doc.19, recalls the text of Resolution Conf. 9.14, and invites the Standing Committee to consider what other activities, if any, it would like to pursue in this regard.

Rhino Conservation Issues

Recent population figures have given the impression that the populations of black and white rhinoceroses are generally stable or increasing across the continent. Similar information from Asia, however, suggests that the species on this continent, especially the Indian rhino, may be in more immediate need of enhanced protection. Whilst previous efforts to establish a monitoring system were abandoned due to cost, a more focused system which concentrates on the populations at greatest risk might be affordable and represent good conservation value.

There are two main uses for illegally traded rhino horn. The first is for traditional medicine in China, in East and South East Asia, and in Asian communities worldwide. The second is to make traditional dagger handles in Yemen (which joined CITES in 1997). Recent investigations suggest that Yemen is the destination for a substantial proportion of illegally traded African rhino horn, and any efforts to monitor or control the trade into and within this country could be very valuable.

Recent Developments In CITES

At CoP13 in 2004, the white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) population of Swaziland was transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II, Namibia and South Africa were awarded increased black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) hunting trophy export quotas (which had previously been set at zero).

The Species Survival Network (SSN) is concerned that this increase in permitted trade will encourage the illegal trade in rhino horn. Given the low global population level of black rhinoceros there is also an occasional legitimate need for specific animals to be translocated internationally for restocking or reinforcement purposes; translocation of animals for hunting purposes should not be permitted, nor should hunting lead to a reduction in the number of animals available for translocation for conservation purposes. Such conservation restocking may include the introduction of 'post-reproductive' animals in areas within the historic range which would benefit ecologically from the presence of this native species, even if a sustainable population cannot be established.

Recommendations

SSN suggests that the Standing Committee consider fulfilling its obligation under Resolution Conf. 9.14 to pursue actions aimed at reducing the illegal trade in rhino parts by:

- Soliciting proposals for an indicator system, developed in collaboration with local and international NGOs, to monitor illegal killing of rhinos in Asia, and particularly the greater one-horned rhino;
- Actively working work with the Government of Yemen and any other interested Parties, bodies and individuals, to develop proposals for the establishment of a system to monitor illegal trade in rhino horn in Yemen;
- Requesting information from Parties, NGOs and individuals which might help establish where the development and implementation of a system to monitor rhinoceros populations or trade in rhinoceros parts might represent good value; and
- Requesting from the Government of Yemen a detailed report on the current state of rhino horn trade in the country and efforts currently being made to address this trade.

Furthermore, considering the conservation of rhinoceroses in general, SSN suggests that the Standing Committee requires those countries currently permitted to trade in rhino trophies to publish full reports of the legal trade, and of illegal trade and illegal killing of rhinoceroses within their borders, and, furthermore, any requests for live animals for *in situ* introduction for the purposes of conservation, and their responses to such requests.