

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM



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**AT THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION
STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

**08 MAY 2014, 09h00
WINDHOEK, KHOMAS REGION**

Director of Proceedings

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Senior Government Officials

Members of the Law Enforcement Agencies

Officials of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism

Representatives of NGOs and the Private Sector

Dear Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to be with you here today for this very important stakeholder meeting on law enforcement and wildlife protection.

Namibia has made tremendous effort and has had significant success stories in biodiversity conservation. An extensive network of National Parks was expanded to conserve its globally significant biodiversity. National Parks such as Bwabwata, Dorob, Mangetti and Sperrgebiet National Parks were proclaimed after Namibia's independence. These are vital tools for conserving Namibia's essential biodiversity including endangered species.

Aligned with Namibia's incentive-based conservation paradigm, the national *Rhino Custodianship Programme* was established in 1993 to facilitate the recovery of Namibia's rhino population while allowing private landowners to become custodians over state-owned rhinos, the right to benefit through ecotourism. Strategic translocations of black rhinos have been carried out since the mid-1990s by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET)

under this programme. Wildlife has been moved from areas of high population density in national parks, and later from communal areas and private reserves, to re-establish former rhino ranges. Black rhinos now occur in numerous sub-populations from the Orange River all the way northwards to the Kunene.

Much of Africa, including Namibia, lost large components of its wildlife over the last century, for variety of reasons. Colonial laws disenfranchised people from wildlife and destroyed the traditional land and natural resource management systems that had co-evolved in Africa. Post-Independence instability in some countries and problems with governance in general, are well known to have exacerbated this further. Within the last few decades, the continent lost most of its elephants, almost all of its rhinos, and many other species became confined to protected areas such as national parks. It is unfortunate that this process is still ongoing in some countries.

However, it is also true that some countries and some Governments in Africa and the World at large have reversed this trend very successfully, and that wildlife is recovering or has recovered. In Namibia, for example, there are currently greater numbers of wildlife than any time in the past hundred years. There is more than twice as much wildlife outside our protected areas than inside them. Our elephant population has virtually quadrupled over the last twenty years to over twenty thousand and we now have more than one thousand black rhinoceros, to mention just a few examples.

Namibia is committed to the sustainable use of wildlife resources, as is indeed provided for in our national constitution. Sustainable use of wildlife

resources is the result of good conservation and good wildlife management, and it is our collective interest to ensure that we use this resource sustainably.

By now it has become common knowledge that tourism in general has grown to be one of the most important industry in Namibia in terms of its strong contribution to the Gross Domestic Product, employment creation and the well-being and social upliftment of our rural people.

Namibia's success story comes from our programme for community based conservation of wildlife. Our Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme has helped us to set the scene for a conservation strategy in an independent Namibia. In 1996, the Nature Conservation Ordinance Number 4 of 1975 was amended to allow for the establishment of conservancies in communal areas.

Conservancies are now being established as local community based institutions for managing natural resources. Through legislation, communities that form conservancies gain management rights over wildlife and tourism. They are able to use these management rights to develop economic opportunities such as eco-tourism and hunting.

These opportunities in turn bring income and jobs for communities in some of the poorest areas of the country. At the same time, the income gained by conservancies provide an incentive for continued wise management of wildlife and other natural resources as communities wish to maintain that income flow into the future. It should be emphasized that conservancies are

not areas for wildlife and tourism only. They bring additional opportunities for rural people to manage wildlife and tourism alongside their normal activities of livestock management and crop growing.

Our Namibian Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme is now widely regarded as an innovative and successful people-oriented approach to conservation. We have become recognized as a leader in this field. We have restored the link between conservation and rural development by enabling communal areas farmers to derive a direct income from the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism activities.

We have seen a spectacular response to these policy initiatives. We now have seventy nine registered conservancies on State Land, representing more than three hundred thousand people and one hundred thousand square kilometres of land. We have seen a strong recovery of the wildlife in these conservancies, not only through the active protection given by the relevant communities but also by the active reintroduction of wildlife in areas where they formerly occurred.

We have seen the growth of capacity in the conservancies to manage this wildlife, and develop economic activities based on this wildlife. We have seen the creation of jobs and the generation of revenue in areas that had few options other than subsistence farming. We have seen how well local communities have integrated wildlife management in their other activities and increasingly how such wildlife management is complementing other forms of land use.

However, there are still some challenges. Illegal hunting of our elephants and rhinos is one, and we urgently need to address this challenge.

Recently, we have noted with great concern about the recent activities of poaching of rhinos and the illegal possession of fourteen rhino horns in the country. Given that poaching for ivory and rhino horn is presently occurring in southern Africa, there is a high probability that attention will shift to Namibia as we have recently experienced. Poaching for ivory is already occurring in the North Eastern Regions of the country, although it has now been contained.

Following an extended period of low wildlife crime in Namibia there is a clear requirement for a strategy to upgrade law enforcement and wildlife crime prevention capacity in the country as well as for immediate action that should be part of, and feed into, the overall strategy. Longer-term strategic activities involve issues of recruitment, training, and discipline, collaborating with other law enforcement agencies within Namibia and in neighbouring countries, extending public awareness and support, and developing ways to involve communal conservancies more effectively in selected aspects of law enforcement.

The immediate requirement is to control the emerging commercial ivory poaching in the north east part of the country and to prevent the westwards spread of rhino and elephant poaching into the Etosha National Park and beyond.

Namibia's values and fundamental objectives regarding its natural environment, biodiversity and wildlife are clearly enunciated in its constitution and policies. The Nature Conservation Ordinance, 4 of 1975 is being revised and receiving urgent attention and priority by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The protection of wildlife and associated law enforcement is but one of several means objectives employed to achieve the country's fundamental objectives regarding wildlife conservation.

The protection of wildlife essentially involves preventing crime. The focus should be on preventing animals being killed illegally and not just on following up after they have been killed. Perhaps the most effective component of crime prevention, whether in an urban or rural setting, is that of establishing and maintaining a law enforcement or security presence on the ground. For wildlife protection this requires dedicated, well trained and well equipped field staff. However, in the face of high valued products such as rhino horn and ivory, and the involvement of external criminal syndicates, this is seldom sufficient and additional components are required.

For conserving endangered species there are four main areas of capacity and expertise required, namely 1) the ability to manage the endangered species and species populations in the field, 2) the ability to provide and maintain habitat in which species populations can recover and expand, 3) the ability to protect the species from illegal use and to enforce national and international agreements designed to protect the species, and 4) the ability to raise strong public awareness and support for the conservation of the species.

It is therefore important to appreciate that regulation of use is an essential component for sustainability in use.

I am happy that wildlife experts, magistrates, prosecutors, lawyers, Police Officers, members of the Namibia Defence Force, Intelligence experts, Custom officials, Immigration officials, and many other experts are gathered here for the next two days to deliberate on this matter. We need to stop this illegal killing of our wildlife now.

I thank you again for this opportunity to be present and wish you well in your discussions.

I thank you.