



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO: ALL MEDIA HOUSES

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SUBJECT: POACHING ACTIVITIES

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The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has noted with great concern about the recent activities of poaching of rhinos and the illegal possession of fourteen rhino horns in the country. The Ministry together with the Namibian Police are investigating these illegal activities further.

Since controlling a surge in poaching in the late 1980s and early 1990s Namibia has experienced insignificant levels of illegal killing of wildlife, particularly of rhinos and elephants. The changes in Protected Areas and Wildlife Management Policies that followed with Independence and the rapid growth of the Community Based Natural Resource Management and the Conservancy Programme in particular have no doubt contributed to the upward population trends shown by most wildlife species in the country.

Namibia is committed to the sustainable use of wildlife resources, as is indeed provided for in our national constitution and we will therefore not allow our wildlife resources to be taken away through illegal hunting.

Our conservation success story comes from our programme for community based conservation of wildlife and efficient protected area management. The 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 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.

Poaching may therefore have severe economic implications through adverse impacts on tourism and trophy hunting. The current illegal wildlife related activities clearly need to be brought under control. In doing so, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism will continue strengthening its efforts in effective crime prevention and law enforcement through a coordination and integration of clusters of activities such as planning, monitoring and adaptive management; a strong and effective presence on the ground; dedicated investigation units that focuses on criminal syndicates and organised crime; collaboration with the police, army, judiciary, intelligence service, communities , farmers, etc.; and training and retraining of our staff members.

The Government of Namibia condemns such ill-intentioned activities of rhino poaching and call upon those involved to refrain from such activities with immediate effect or risk their chances of being caught and face the full wrath of the law.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the Government of Namibia is not and will never be secretive about the cases of illegal killing wildlife and illicit trade in wildlife products, as this can only be counter-productive to our efforts to curb illicit trade in wildlife products and promote conservation. However, due to the sensitivity of these cases, which are still under investigation and before our court of law, we have not been able to give answers to questions very specific to ongoing cases from various media houses. I would therefore like to assure the general public that when the time is right, a competent Government authority will release appropriate information, as it was done by the Namibian Police on these cases earlier.

We thank you for your support and understanding.