

MINISTER EDNA MOLEWA HIGHLIGHTS PROGRESS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST RHINO POACHING

21 JANUARY 2016

Good Morning,

On behalf of my colleagues we would like to thank everybody for joining us here today, especially our friends and allies in the media, because we cannot get our message out without your support.

As has become custom, we are here today with colleagues from the Security Cluster to present this report to you as a collective, developments regarding our actions to combat rhino poaching in South Africa.

Government departments, the private sector, communities and civil society are united in ensuring that we fight rhino poaching through the Integrated Strategic Management Approach that was adopted by Cabinet in August 2014.

The fact that we are all here today is indicative of the highest level of political commitment to dealing with rhino poaching. In November 2015 President Jacob Zuma visited the Kruger National Park where he participated in various activities ranging from field events to the official opening of the Mission Area Joint Operations Centre.

This centre has become a benchmark for efficiency in anti-poaching through the joint efforts of the departments forming the security cluster.

President Zuma also personally interacted with field rangers who are at the forefront of the poaching war, and honoured our fallen rangers worldwide, by laying a wreath at the Ranger Memorial at the Kruger Gate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Integrated Strategic Management Approach of Rhinoceros is our collaborative effort to tackle poaching. Its key pillars are Compulsory Interventions, Managing Rhino Populations, Long-term Sustainability Interventions, National and International Co-operation and new interventions.

Since we met last August, there have been a number of developments with regards to the implementation of the game-changing Integrated Strategic Management Approach of Rhinoceros, which I will now address.

1. Compulsory Interventions

1. 1. Anti-poaching compulsory interventions

As alluded to earlier, the onslaught against our rhino has continued unabated.

This has necessitated that we step up our efforts, which are among others, the improvement of our strategies. This approach has delivered a number of satisfying results over the past year, particularly with regards to the number of arrests made.

Arrests

During 2015 a total of 317 poachers were arrested for rhino poaching related offences. Of this, 202 were arrested in the Kruger National Park and 115 in the area adjacent to the Park.

This is a marked increase in arrests from 258 in 2014.

A total of 125 firearms were seized inside the Park in 2015, and 63 just outside the Park – a total of 188 compared to the 148 of the previous year.

These positive developments are the outcome of stepped up collaboration with the Security Cluster, as well as working with communities adjacent to the park.

We are particularly pleased to announce that by the end of 2015, **all** rhino poaching crime scenes in the Kruger National Park - I emphasize, **ALL** rhino poaching crime scenes - have been attended to in accordance with standard protocols.

If one considers the serious backlog we faced in 2014 and 2015, this is a remarkable achievement.

It is due to the sterling efforts of the SAPS and KNP forensic investigation teams - as well as the significant training effort made during the year in building up capacity to process these crime scenes.

On the specific issue of Crime Scene Management, funding amounting to 2,7 million US dollars received from the GEF-UNEP Rhino Programme enabled us in 2015 to purchase forensic mobile crime scene units, which will be particularly useful in crime scene management in outlying areas.

In terms of the inter-departmental collaboration between DEA and our partners in the Security Cluster, we have also provided intensive training and awareness-raising for close to 400 Magistrates and Prosecutors last year.

At this point we want to commend the dedication and persistence of the team of the DPCI/Hawks who successfully undertook an operation that led to the arrest of approximately 15 high-level members of a poaching syndicate.

The operation, This operation, called Operation Ringleader was the result of yet another collaborative effort between the DEA and the security cluster and was the outcome of an over two yearlong investigation. The charges ranged from money laundering to offences relating to the Prevention of Organized Crime Act. This operation confirmed for us the complexity of these syndicates and need for us to be persistent as these are not matters that can be solved overnight.

I want at this point to hand over to my colleague Minister Masutha who will give us some insights into the prosecution of poaching related offences, as well as on other major cases.

Thank you indeed, Minister, for those insights.

Returning now to the Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros, I will turn now to the other compulsory interventions;

1.2 Intensive Protection Zone

The Intensive Protection Zone concept remains an important pillar for the protection of the high density rhino population in the South of the KNP. The Kruger National Park is the epicentre of the poaching crisis and logically this is where most of international, regional and national attention is directed.

The utilization of technology and well-equipped and trained reaction forces with good land and air mobility, as well as a significant night capability, has enhanced pro-active anti-poaching operations.

Elements of this IPZ concept are being expanded to other National and private Parks - even other African countries.

1.3 Proactive anti-poaching measures and the use of technology

In KwaZulu-Natal's Ezemvelo rhino reserves, management and law enforcement have been equipped with new digital two-way radios communication systems. Access control has also been improved in rhino reserves.

As I mentioned earlier, President Zuma has also officially launched the Mission Area Joint Operations Centre in the Kruger National Park where we have employed cutting-edge technology to aid us in our fight against poaching.

1.4. Ports of entry and exit

During our last report-back on the Integrated Strategic plan, we briefed you on the successful work being done by our Environmental Management Inspectorate (EMI's), also known as the Green Scorpions, at ports of entry and exit, namely OR Tambo International Airport and King Shaka International Airport.

Our border training programme focusing on the Illicit International Cross Border Movement of Endangered Species has since been intensified - now with an operational aspect.

The Green Scorpions are rolling out this training programme together with the National Border Management Coordinating Committee (NBMCC). Since October 2015, the team has trained and undertaken operations at a number of land and air border posts. As a result of this programme, to date,

1047 border enforcement officials have received training. The roll-out of this phase of the training will continue until end of March 2016.

Poaching Statistics

Taking into account the above interventions, in conjunction with other aspects of the Integrated Strategic Management of Rhinoceros under implementation, I am today pleased to announce that for the first time in a decade - the poaching situation has stabilized.

Considering that this is despite escalating poaching pressure, and in the face of an increased and relentless rise of poaching activity into protected areas - this is **very very** good news, and offers great cause for optimism.

By the end of December 2015, the number of poached rhino was 1 175, of which 826 were in the Kruger National Park.

To put this into context; by the end of December 2014, the number of poached rhino stood at 1 215.

Considering that there has been an approximately ten percent increase in the number of poaching activity in the Kruger National Park (KNP), it is clear that were it not for these interventions, the situation would be **far** worse and many more rhino would be lost.

What is particularly good about this news, is that whilst poaching numbers often rise drastically over December, this time, the much-feared year-end spike was averted.

It is undeniable that this is because of the efforts of **our people**, in particular the concerted efforts of our law-enforcement and security agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the good news does not end there.

We are also pleased to report that based on a new census of the rhino population conducted by SANParks; the South African rhino population continues to be stable.

The 2015 survey determined that the Kruger National Park is home to between approximately 8 400 to 9 300 white rhino.

I will now turn to the other anti-poaching interventions included in the Integrated Strategic plan.

2. Managing Rhino Populations

Last week we gazetted the Draft Amendment of the norms and standards for the marking of rhinoceros and rhinoceros horn, and the hunting of rhinoceros for trophy hunting purposes, for public comment.

The amendment aims to clarify and strengthen certain clauses contained in the 2012 Norms and Standards, especially in respect of the movement and safekeeping of rhino horns and the management of the hunting of both white and black rhino. The public have until 11 February to comment on the proposed Amendments.

The translocation of rhino from high poaching risk areas to safer and well-selected localities has been an integral part of our strategy. During 2015 124 rhino were moved out of the KNP. These translocations to protected areas will continue in March 2016.

Creating a 'suite' of private, provincial and community run rhino strongholds remain a key focus of SANParks' biological management interventions.

We want to emphasize this because our interventions aren't only about addressing security concerns, they are also about growing the rhino population.

The Biodiversity Management Plan, our tool to address the long-term conservation of the species, has been finalized and published for implementation in December 2015.

This plan enables the evaluation of conservation progress and management, and sets out key actions and strategies needed to ensure that monitoring protection conservation and sustainable management of the species will contribute to meeting conservation goals - as well as the long-term vision for the conservation of white rhino.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In considering the biological management of rhino populations, it is important to reflect on the contribution and efforts made by rhino on private and communal land. A significant number of the populations on private and communal land have the potential to contribute in a meaningful manner to the conservation of the species.

A new survey commissioned by the Department of Environmental Affairs, that was concluded in November 2015 provides fascinating insights into the white rhino that fall outside of state ownership.

Approximately 5000, or one quarter of the global white rhino population, are in the hands of private and communal owners in South Africa. This figure has increased over the past three decades from a starting point of approximately 800 in the mid-1980s to the current level.

This survey is the latest in a series of 10 surveys conducted since 1987 of white rhino in non-state hands. It is important to note that for the first time the survey included land that has been successfully claimed through the land reform process and now has white rhino under communal ownership.

3. Long-Term Sustainability Measures - Communities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President Zuma emphasized in his visit to the Kruger National Park in November last year, any long terms solution to addressing poaching must by necessity involve empowering communities who live adjacent to our parks.

During his visit the President called on communities to continue to be active role players in the conservation of wildlife, and in particular called on traditional leaders to play a greater role. In response the traditional leaders pledged a firm commitment to heed the President's call.

That is why we will be engaging with the traditional leaders in order to drive programmes that will see communities recognizing the value of wildlife to their livelihoods.

In December 2015 we launched our Biodiversity Economy Strategy at the Biodiversity Indaba in Durban. At the heart of this strategy is promoting a sense of guardianship of wildlife within our communities.

Our aim is that in the next fourteen (14) years R7 billion funding will be made available for implementation of programmes under the Biodiversity Economy Strategy.

The strategy seeks to contribute to the transformation of the biodiversity economy in South Africa through:

- inclusive economic opportunities, reflected by a sector which is equitable
- equitable and fair processes and procedures
- equity in access to and the distribution of resources (i.e. business, human, financial, indigenous species, land, water) in the market

Among the aims of these programmes is to transfer wildlife to previously disadvantaged communities and entrepreneurs. This will largely be facilitated through our Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programme (EPIP) as well as through mobilising game donations.

A hundred and seven community projects are at various stages of development. They will assist with infrastructure development and the transfer of donated animals, including tribal authorities in various provinces.

The Bushbuckridge area in Mpumalanga, for example, has been identified for the development of an expanded tourist and wildlife economy and conservation estate.

The ultimate goal is the establishment of a vibrant local economy based on sustainable management of the area's natural and other assets. These developments will address poverty and livelihood security and overall enhance benefits for the local community.

At the Biodiversity Indaba several pledges were made for contributions to community empowerment, and we as government will be donating more high-value species (such as rhino and sable) to communities who own land and have good animal protection measures in place.

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) will lead the process of implementing the Strategy in partnership with key departments namely Science and Technology, Rural Development and Land Reform, Trade and Industry, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Small Business Development, Tourism and Economic Development.

On the sidelines of the Biodiversity Indaba four dehorned rhino were handed over to a Community Trust at a ceremony in KwaZulu-Natal. The donation was facilitated by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. The rhino were donated by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

A similar donation of four white rhino will soon be handed over to another Community, once additional security measures on the communal property are finalised.

We as government remain committed to facilitating community ownership of wildlife resources as an integral part of our rhino protection strategy.

4. Memoranda of Understanding

We continue to collaborate strategically with rhino range and consumer states, to support us in neutralising the threat of organised transnational criminal syndicates involved in the illegal wildlife trade.

Vietnam:

As part of our Memorandum of Understanding signed with Vietnam in 2013, South Africa played host to the Vietnamese Youth Wilderness Trails programme in 2015. This is a demand reduction campaign that will capacitate young rhino ambassadors throughout schools in Vietnam, and will run until 2017.

Cambodia:

In our August briefing we reported that we have signed an MOU with Cambodia. We are going to be following this MOU signing with implementation that will include a carnival that is planned to be carried out in Cambodia, aimed at raising awareness on Rhino and Wildlife Crime in general.

Lao PDR:

We have also finalized an MOU with the People's Democratic Republic of Lao, which we hope to sign soon.

Mozambique:

Cooperation with Mozambique has been further cemented not only during the discussions held between President Zuma and President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique in October 2015, but also through a number of projects undertaken. Allow me to briefly highlight some of the key developments in this regard:

- The presentation to Mozambique's Environmental Police with a donation of equipment to the value of R2, 6 million to aid in strengthening Mozambique's environmental law enforcement efforts, and support the rangers in Limpopo National Park.
- Infrastructure and facilities upgrades at Mapai Base and Gaza Camp in the Limpopo National Park, as well as improved roads and access control at critical entry points to the park
- Guard and Field Ranger training in association with Southern African Wildlife College;
- An investment of R 1,7 million in the installation of an advanced digital communication system in Limpopo National Park.
- The resettlement of villages as part of the community resettlement programme at Limpopo National Park is still underway and it is anticipated that the programme should be completed by the end of 2017.

5. International And Regional Cooperation

South Africa continues to work with regional and international enforcement networks such as the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the CITES Secretariat, World Bank, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Interpol (making up the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC)). We are thus able to strengthen our priority actions at a national level as well as harness the support of international partners for those priorities that involve transnational syndicates.

South Africa has and will continue to play a key role on the Advisory Board of INTERPOL's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Committee.

People's Republic of China:

In December, the 6th Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Johannesburg, resulting in the Johannesburg Action Plan which includes provisions relating to the illegal trade in wildlife.

South Africa welcomes the inclusion of wildlife conservation and combating the illegal trade of wildlife into the FOCAC Action Plan. The Ministerial meeting and Heads of State Summit of FOCAC saw our two countries agree to transform the wildlife trade dynamics from Africa to China, with a view to significantly reducing illegal trade and supporting the sustainable utilisation of Africa's wild plants and animals, including regulated legal trade in wildlife.

We have unfortunately also had to part ways with a diplomat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stationed in South Africa- due to a concern raised around his conduct and involvement in illegal trade in horns obtained from poached rhinos. South Africa initiated a process to investigate his conduct and then commenced with the diplomatic process which resulted in his expulsion.

Such criminal activities, where diplomats abuse diplomatic privilege to commit crimes, will not be tolerated, and we will not hesitate to take harsh action against anyone else involved in such activities.

We would like to turn briefly to a number of other key developments in the sector.

Committee Of Enquiry

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you will be aware, a Committee of Inquiry has been established in terms of a Cabinet decision, to investigate the feasibility of a possible trade in rhino horn, or not. The Inter-Ministerial Committee will meet soon to consider the report of the Committee of Inquiry and the Technical Advisory Committee, and will continue to engage with the process and formulate recommendations for Cabinet's consideration and approval.

Domestic Trade In Rhino Horn

Many of you will have been following developments in the rhino horn moratorium judgment handed down by the High Court of South Africa, Gauteng Provincial Division, Pretoria, in November 2015.

An application for leave to appeal was filed with the Registrar of the High Court on 9 December 2015. The application for leave to appeal suspended the operation and execution of the judgment in terms of section 18 of the Superior Courts Act, 2013 (Act No. 10 of 2013). This means that the moratorium on the domestic trade in rhino horn remained in place.

Our application for leave to appeal was unfortunately dismissed with costs on the 20th of January 2016. With the result being that the court's decision is that the moratorium is no longer in place.

My legal team is not yet privy to the reason for the decision, but I have decided to apply for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal.

My application, once lodged, will result in the suspension of the operation and execution of the court's decision to review and set aside the moratorium.

I will not be commenting any further on this application, but it must be emphasised that this matter does not have an impact on the international trade in rhino horn for commercial purposes. Commercial international trade in rhino horn is still prohibited in terms of the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

CITES COP17

The Department of Environmental Affairs has provided information to the CITES Standing Committee relating to the preparations for the 17th Conference of Parties (CoP) to CITES, which will be hosted by South Africa. The meeting is scheduled to take place from 24 September 2016 – 5 October 2016 at the

Sandton Convention Centre. A notification containing detailed information relating to logistical arrangements will be released by the CITES Secretariat later this month. This will include information relating to registration, accommodation, and visa-requirements for participants, exhibitions and side events.

The Department of Environmental Affairs had a stakeholder workshop on 9 December 2015 to share information with stakeholders that registered to participate in preparations for the COP about the CoP, the processes leading up to the CoP and to solicit their views on the matters that would possibly be discussed at the COP. The agenda for the CoP has not been confirmed, but a draft agenda was discussed based on matters emanating from the 16th CoP to CITES.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What is evident is that all sectors of society have mobilized around the campaign to save our rhino.

It is heartening to see that South Africans from all walks of life, with the support of the donor community and NGO community, both locally and internationally, are behind us and working alongside us.

This briefing would not be complete without acknowledging the support we have received from various entities and stakeholders both locally and internationally: the support received from the Peace Parks Foundation, the CSIR, the Warren Buffet Foundation and the Dutch and Swedish Postcode Lottery Funds in particular. We are also grateful for the support received from a number of countries: the US, Germany, Netherlands, and the Global Environmental Facility. There are too many to name here: but we are immensely grateful for all your contributions, including our anonymous donors and our younger rhino ambassadors who are always finding ways to creatively raise funds to support this cause.

As we have emphasized throughout, it is **our people** who stand between our precious wildlife resources, and the poacher's gun.

The work they do on the poaching frontlines, in the service of their country, is to be commended again and again. I mention Mr Amos Mzimba, who with his K9 Belgian shepherd "Killer" who recently received a medal from the UK's People's Dispensary for Sick Animals for his contribution towards the successful arrest of poachers in the Kruger National Park.

On behalf of the whole of South Africa we want to salute you, and thank you.

The war against rhino crime cannot be won by government alone.

As did President Zuma in his visit to the Kruger National Park last year, we once again implore each one of you to report any wildlife crime you are aware of so that we can continue to successfully act against those behind this senseless crime.

Let us make 2016 the year in which we can declare that are not only close to winning the war against poachers, but that we have all stood up done our part.

So much so that we as the Department of Environmental Affairs, together with our colleagues present here today, are claiming this success on behalf of each and every South African!

I thank you.