



CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

A CITES Ministerial dialogue for key States concerned with the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn was convened by the CITES Secretariat at the Warwick Hotel, Geneva, Switzerland, on 14 February 2015. As key States identified in CITES decisions or recommendations related to rhinoceros poaching and illegal trade in rhinoceros horn, the Czech Republic, Mozambique, South Africa and Viet Nam were invited to participate in the dialogue. China was invited to attend as an observer to share its experiences with curbing the demand for illegally-traded rhinoceros horn since 1993, and in recognition of concerns about a possible emerging market for rhinoceros horn in China. The President of the African Ministerial Council on the Environment (AMCEN) was also invited to observe in light of AMCEN's growing interest in the implications of wildlife crime for Africa. Finally, the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) was represented by the CITES Secretariat and INTERPOL. The participants of the Ministerial dialogue are listed in the Annex.

The purpose of the dialogue was to bring together key States implicated in the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn to discuss the priority areas for enhanced bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation to address both the supply and demand for rhinoceros horn, and to secure further political commitment to implement appropriate activities and cooperation in response. Ministers and their high-level delegates were invited to reflect on the outcomes of the Senior Officials meeting¹ that preceded the Ministerial dialogue, discuss the required responses and commitment to combat the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn, and adopt a Ministerial Statement on the issue.

The dialogue was Chaired and facilitated by Mr. John E. Scanlon, the Secretary-General of CITES. This informal document reflects the Chair's general summary of the issues that were discussed and does not attribute comments to individual speakers or Parties.

Setting the scene for the dialogue

Opening remarks were provided by Mr. Scanlon, who thanked all States and agencies for their participation and noted the need for strong and coordinated multilateral action to combat rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn. Mr. Scanlon also acknowledged the significant actions already being implemented by key States to address both demand and supply, along with the concerning fact that rhinoceros-related crime continues to escalate despite these concerted efforts.

Mr. Ben Janse van Rensburg, CITES Chief of Enforcement Support, provided a summary of the *Recommendations on well-targeted short and medium-term actions to further enhance international cooperation*² arising from the Senior Officials meeting held on 11-12 February 2015.

Following this summary, the Chair opened the floor to Ministers and high-level representatives³ for interventions on the topic *Key actions for implementation to combat rhinoceros poaching and illegal trade in*

¹ The CITES Senior Officials meeting for key States concerned with the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn was held in Geneva on 11-12 February 2015. The meeting was attended by officials from national wildlife law enforcement agencies in the Czech Republic, Mozambique, South Africa and Viet Nam. Officials from China attended the meeting as observers, along with representatives from ICCWC partner organizations (CITES Secretariat, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization – The World Bank was not represented). The meeting resulted in the development of 19 short- and medium-term actions that were recommended for implementation by the key States to further strengthen international cooperation to combat rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn.

² <http://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/news/pr/2015/CITES-RhinoDialogue-Recommendations.pdf>

³ The names of the Ministers and high-level representatives in attendance are listed in the Annex.

rhinoceros horn – progress, priorities and commitment to further action. Following the interventions by key States, observers were invited to provide remarks.

Summary of discussions

Interventions were made by the Hon. Edna B. E. Molewa on behalf of South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Pedro Comissário on behalf of Mozambique, Mr. Erik Geuss on behalf of the Czech Republic, and Associate Professor Ba Ngai Nguyen on behalf of Viet Nam. Remarks were also provided by the Hon. Binilith S. Mahenge on behalf of AMCEN, Mr. Weisheng Wang on behalf of China, His Excellency Mr. Modest Jonathan Mero⁴, and Mr. Cees van Duijn from INTERPOL on behalf of ICCWC.

The Ministerial Dialogue enabled the four key States implicated in rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn – being the Czech Republic, Mozambique, South Africa and Viet Nam – to reaffirm their high-level political commitment to combat rhinoceros-related crimes and to collectively discuss and agree to deliver further collaborative actions.

Participants expressed their thanks to the CITES Secretariat for convening and organizing the Ministerial and Senior Officials meetings and thanked the Senior Officials for their hard work over the two days to reach agreement on a series of recommended short and medium-term actions to strengthen cooperation.

An environmental crime with wide-reaching impacts

Speakers noted their serious concern about statistics depicting the continued escalation of rhinoceros poaching and the ongoing demand for illegal rhinoceros horn. The negative consequences of these crimes for rhinoceros conservation were noted, along with the broad-ranging impacts on economies and livelihoods. Speakers also noted the role of illegal wildlife trade in undermining good governance and the rule of law.

A diversity of actions underway

Speakers noted the relevant Decisions of the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (Bangkok, 2013), recommendations from the 65th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee (Geneva, July 2014) and the strategies and proposed actions developed by the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force (Nairobi, October 2013), which provide a strong basis for Parties to take concrete action to combat rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn.

The range of actions underway across range, transit and destination States – along with the on-ground results that they have achieved – were highlighted. These included conservation programmes to translocate rhinoceroses to intensive protection zones, and associated attention on local communities that live in and around these areas to promote community ownership of rhinoceroses. The priority given to illegal trade in rhinoceros horn by national wildlife law enforcement agencies was emphasized. Speakers mentioned the development of cross-agency task forces, the training of police officers in wildlife crime scene investigation and their deployment to priority areas affected by poaching. Targeted efforts to improve enforcement results through better crime scene management, enhanced sharing of intelligence and the implementation of stronger penalties for offenders involved in wildlife crime were also highlighted. The seizures of rhinoceros horns and arrest and subsequent prosecution of offenders resulting from these enforcement efforts were also discussed. Finally, speakers highlighted the efforts to reduce demand that are underway in consumer countries, including in collaboration with business communities.

⁴ His Excellency Mr. Modest Jonathan Mero, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, accompanied the Hon. Binilith S. Mahenge to the event.

A pressing need to collaborate

The discussions reaffirmed that cooperation between the key States implicated in rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn is of paramount importance. Speakers noted that rhinoceros-related crimes provide an urgent issue that requires strong international interaction in response.

In particular, the importance of improving communication channels and sharing information between States and between enforcement agencies was raised. The lack of effective exchange of intelligence that is sometimes observed was noted with concern. Speakers also noted the importance of collaboration and communication to help share and exchange experiences, successes and best practices.

The importance of pursuing bilateral dialogues to strengthen enforcement, and to underpin the implementation of the Senior Officials recommendations for short- and medium-term action, was raised. The importance of working in partnership to tackle money laundering and corruption was also emphasized.

Speakers also noted the value of the Memoranda of Understanding that had been developed between some of the key States to support bilateral collaboration and cooperation.

Speakers noted with appreciation the role of ICCWC in enhancing international collaboration, through both its programme of targeted capacity-building activities and the operational enforcement tools provided by ICCWC partner organizations. The ongoing commitment of States to participate in ICCWC-supported activities and training opportunities was also raised as an important factor.

The involvement of organized crime groups in rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn was noted, with speakers reaffirming that these crimes are transnational organized crime. The change in the *modus operandi* of criminal networks involved in the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn to use more sophisticated methods was also highlighted.

A commitment to work together

The four key States commended each other for their concerted efforts to date and for their commitment to work in collaboration to combat illegal trade in rhinoceros horn. Specific examples of bilateral and multilateral cooperation were emphasized. Speakers expressed both confidence and determination that the diversity of actions underway – along with the actions recommended by Senior Officials – would start to bear fruit. Strong support for the proposed Ministerial Statement was expressed. Observers commended the commitment of the four key States to adopt the Ministerial Statement and collectively implement the recommended short- and medium-term actions to further strengthen international cooperation.

Adoption of Geneva Statement

At the conclusion of the interventions, the *Geneva Statement on Combating Rhinoceros-related Crimes*⁵ was adopted by acclamation by the Czech Republic, Mozambique, South Africa and Viet Nam.

Award presentation

Following the Ministerial Dialogue, CITES Secretary-General's Certificates of Commendation⁶ were presented to South African authorities that participated in 'Operation Whisper', an undercover operation that resulted in the arrest of members of organized crime groups involved in rhinoceros poaching and illegal international trade in rhinoceros horn. The certificates were accepted by the Hon. Edna B. E. Molewa, South African Minister of Environmental Affairs, on behalf of the South African Police Service, the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa and Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife.

⁵ <http://cites.org/sites/default/files/eng/news/pr/2015/CITES-RhinoDialogue-Statement.pdf>

⁶ http://cites.org/eng/disc/certificate_commend.php

Annex: Participants in the CITES Ministerial Dialogue for key States concerned with the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn

Ministers and their nominated delegates

Representing the Czech Republic:

Mr. Erik Geuss, General Director, Czech Environmental Inspectorate

Representing Mozambique:

His Excellency Mr. Pedro Comissário, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mozambique to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

Representing South Africa:

The Hon. Edna B. E. Molewa, Minister of Environmental Affairs

Representing Viet Nam:

Associate Professor Ba Ngai Nguyen, Deputy Director General, Viet Nam Administration of Forestry

Chair and Facilitator

Mr. John E. Scanlon, Secretary-General of CITES

Observers

Representing the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN):

The Hon. Binilith S. Mahenge, Minister of State – Environment, United Republic of Tanzania, and President of AMCEN⁷

Mr. Arnold Lucas Mapinduzi, Personal Secretary to Minister of State, Hon. Binilith S. Mahenge

Representing China:

Mr. Weisheng Wang, Deputy Director, The Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora Import and Export Management Office of the People's Republic of China

Ms. Liuying Yang, Division Director, Anti-smuggling Bureau, Customs General Administration of the People's Republic of China

Senior Officials

Officials and support staff were in attendance from the following:

Czech Republic

Mozambique

South Africa

Viet Nam

China

CITES Secretariat

INTERPOL

⁷ The Hon. Binilith S. Mahenge was accompanied by His Excellency Mr. Modest Jonathan Mero, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.