



NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

No. 2015/009

Geneva, 24 February 2015

CONCERNING:

Secretary-General's Certificates of Commendation

1. In 2002, the Secretariat advised Parties of the introduction of Certificates of Commendation that would be issued, at the Secretary-General's discretion, to recognize exemplary actions related to enforcement.
2. The latest such certificates have been awarded to South African authorities that participated in Operation Whisper, a multifaceted undercover operation in South Africa to combat rhinoceros poaching and the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn that took place between December 2011 and May 2012.
3. The South African Police Service, the National Prosecuting Authority of South Africa and Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife were awarded Secretary-General's Certificates of Commendation for their exemplary collective activities during Operation Whisper that resulted in the identification and infiltration of two organized crime groups involved in rhinoceros poaching and the illegal international trade in rhinoceros horn, the arrest of crime group members, their successful prosecution and the initiation of asset forfeiture proceedings.
4. Operation Whisper highlighted the importance of strong inter-agency collaboration and the use of specialized investigation techniques to combat organized crime groups involved in wildlife crime.
5. The certificates were presented in Geneva on 14 February 2015 at the CITES Ministerial dialogue for key States concerned with the illegal trade in rhinoceros horn. The three certificates were accepted by the Hon. Edna B. Molewa, Minister of Environmental Affairs for South Africa, on behalf of the concerned authorities.
6. The past recipients of Secretary-General's Certificates of Commendation can be viewed on the CITES website at http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/certificate_commend.php.