

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA

Seventh Meeting of the Conference of the Parties

Lausanne (Switzerland), 9 to 20 October 1989

Interpretation and Implementation of the Convention

TRADE IN RHINOCEROS PRODUCTS

This document has been prepared and is submitted by the Secretariat. It includes, as an Annex, a report on The Status of Rhino Populations, and the Principal Trade Routes and Entrepots for Rhino Products prepared by Esmond Bradley Martin.

The main objective of this document is to keep the Parties informed of the serious situation of the rhinoceros in most parts of the world, and to urge those which are still authorizing trade in rhino products to fully implement Resolution Conf. 6.10 adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (Ottawa, 1987).

The Secretariat also takes this opportunity to inform the Parties that several cases of illegal trade in rhino horn have been discovered since the last meeting of the Parties, some of which are mentioned in other working documents of this meeting.

PROPOSAL FROM SOUTH AFRICA

The Management Authority of South Africa intended to propose an amendment to the CITES appendices to transfer their populations of Rhinocerotidae from Appendix I to Appendix II subject to an export quota. Apparently for administrative reasons, the proposal was only received a long time after the deadline of 12 May 1989, and the Secretariat had no other option than to refuse the proposal.

Under these circumstances, the Secretariat decided, however, to inform the Conference of the Parties of the situation, in order to allow for a debate on the opportunity of such a proposal, one that would reopen the trade in rhino products, other than hunting trophies, in total contradiction with Resolution Conf. 6.10. The main argument of the proposal is that the total ban has failed to eliminate the illegal trade in rhino horn, that the populations of rhinos in South Africa are safe and increasing and that the sale of rhino products would provide additional funds for conservation actions.

The results of the discussion on this issue may help South Africa to determine whether it would be worthwhile to submit a similar proposal for consideration by the postal vote procedures or at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

THE STATUS OF RHINO POPULATIONS, AND THE PRINCIPAL TRADE
ROUTES AND ENTREPOTS FOR RHINO PRODUCTS

Prepared by Esmond Bradley Martin on behalf of
WWF - World Wide Fund for Nature, and the
African Elephant and Rhino Specialist Group of the
Species Survival Commission of
IUCN - The World Conservation Union

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RHINOCEROS HORN TRADE
SINCE THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES IN JULY 1987

Status of the Five Rhinoceros Species in the World

There are five rhinoceros species, three of which live in Asia. The greater one-horned rhino or Indian rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis) which survives in India, Nepal and Pakistan has probably been slowly increasing in numbers in 1987 and 1988 to around 1,740 primarily due to the decline in poaching in India. In Assam in North-East India, the home of approximately 75 per cent of all the greater one-horned rhinos, the number poached fell from 50 in 1986 to 41 in 1987 and 40 in 1988. The main reason for the decrease is that Indian government authorities have recently allocated greater quantities of money and equipment to combat rhino poaching.

Regrettably, the Indonesian authorities have not significantly increased their resources to help reduce the poaching of the Sumatran rhino (Didermoceros sumatrensis), the second most populous of the Asian species. Today, there may be 750 animals, but there is considerable poaching in Sumatra and Sabah, and more of their habitat has been destroyed recently by logging and farming. Some zoos in the United States of America have recently been working together to bring some of the "doomed" rhinos from the island of Sumatra to zoos in North America in order to initiate a captive-breeding programme; it is fair to say that most of these animals would have been illegally killed if they had remained in Indonesia.

The Java rhino (Rhinoceros sondaicus) population remains roughly the same as two years ago. Although there has been some poaching of the Java rhinos in Ujung Kulon National Park on Java Island, another population of approximately 12 to 15 has been discovered in Viet Nam, bringing the total to an estimated 65 animals.

Over the past few years, the white rhino (Ceratotherium simum) in Africa has been increasing in numbers due to good management of most populations in southern Africa, and now total just under 5,000. However, during the early and mid-1980s, the northern race of the white rhinoceros in central Africa was almost completely eliminated by poachers, and those few remaining in southern Sudan probably have no chance of survival unless they are brought together and protected. The only population of the northern white rhino which has much of a future today is that in Garamba National Park in Zaire. Over the past several years, their number has increased to at least 23 animals.

Massive killings of the black rhino (Rhinoceros bicornis) in the 1970s and early and middle 1980s reduced the total population from about 65,000 in 1970 to around 6,000 in 1986. Since then, however, the population may have almost stabilized with at least one country, Kenya, actually showing an increase in numbers for the first time in many decades. The main place where black rhinos are being killed is in the Lower Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe where from July 1984 to June 1988 a minimum of 423 black rhinos were killed by poachers from Zambia. However, the first six months of 1989 showed a marked improvement in the Zimbabwean anti-poaching efforts compared with the same period the year before. During the same time, the Zimbabweans have also translocated several hundred of the black rhino from the Zambezi Valley to safer areas within the country.

Thus, since the middle of 1987 two rhino species have increased in numbers, two declined, and one is stable.

Principal Trade Routes and Entrepots for Rhino Horn and Hide Today

Due to concerted international pressure, the Government of Burundi prohibited all imports and exports of rhino horn and elephant ivory in November 1987, and this ban has generally been enforced. For the previous few years Burundi with no rhinos and only one elephant was one of the major entrepots in the world for rhino horn and ivory, sending much of it to the United Arab Emirates. With the closure of Burundi as an entrepot some of the rhino horn which had come from poached animals in Zambia, Zimbabwe, the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique moved southwards to South Africa and then was sent illegally by air or sea to Taiwan. In 1987 and 1988 Taiwan became one of the largest entrepots and consumers of African rhino horn and hide in the world. At the same time, Taiwanese were purchasing Asian rhino products in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, paying the highest prices in the world. Although the import and export of rhino horn and hide are illegal in Taiwan, the authorities were not enforcing the law. After the disclosure in the world media of Taiwan's pivotal position in the illicit trade in rhino products, the authorities of Taiwan recently said that it will attempt to stop this commerce. The authorities of South Africa has also tightened up its controls in the past year and increased some fines for people who handle illegal consignments of rhino products.

China continues to use supposedly old stocks of rhino horn to make medicines which are then mostly exported to South-East Asian countries. The government is attempting to stop this foreign trade, but due to lack of qualified manpower and information, more time will be needed for concrete results.

Traders in Asia continue to mention Singapore as a major entrepot for Asian horn. Some of this is being illegally exported from Kalimantan and Sabah directly to Singapore where it is mostly purchased by Taiwanese. The Government of Singapore needs to carry out a stock-taking of the quantities of rhino horn and hide in the possession of the traders prior to Singapore's accession to CITES to prevent new stocks being mixed with the old because old stocks can be locally sold; next the internal trade in rhino products should be banned in Singapore as was done in both Hong Kong and Macau in 1988.

Sumatran rhino horn is imported also into Thailand for internal use and is openly sold in the medicine shops in Bangkok. African horn is widely available and consumed within the Republic of Korea. Internal trade in these two countries must be stopped.

The United Arab Emirates formally withdrew from CITES in early 1988, the first country to do so. In 1987, 1988 and 1989 the U.A.E. was notorious for the establishment of various ivory factories which consumed large quantities of poached tusks from Africa. The U.A.E. also served as an entrepot for rhino horn illegally shipped out of Africa whose final destinations were the Yemen Arab Republic and eastern Asia. By the middle of 1989, Dubai, one of the seven Sheikdoms in the U.A.E., stated that no ivory factories would be allowed within its territory and that all imports and exports of rhino horn would be banned.

Zambia remains the principal entrepot for black rhinos killed in Zimbabwe, and Zambia as well. A major effort must be made to identify the middlemen and put them out of business.

Although there have been some significant conservation successes concerning trade in rhino products since the middle of 1987, including the elimination of Burundi and Dubai as major entrepots for rhino horn, the emergence of the Zambian-South Africa-Taiwan connection has had devastating results. From 1980 to 1986 the price of African horn wholesale stayed roughly the same (US\$ 600 - 750 per kg in eastern Asia), but due to the greater demand in Taiwan, the

wholesale price for black and white rhino horns has recently increased to about US\$ 1,500 per kg in the Yemen Arab Republic and Taiwan, putting additional pressure on the remaining rhino populations in Africa. Perhaps this increase in price was responsible for the killing of all the white rhinos on public land (Meru National Park) in Kenya towards the end of 1988, and the resumption of poaching of the rare desert rhinos in Damaraland in Namibia in early 1989. The wholesale price of Indian and Sumatran rhino horn has also increased from US\$ 10,000 per kg in 1980-86 to US\$ 10,000 - 15,000 per kg in 1988 due to the strong Taiwanese demand. Much greater efforts are needed in Taiwan, not a Party to CITES, to enforce its laws and to use more substitutes for rhino products.

Recommendations for Action

1. Bring to bear political, diplomatic and economic pressure on the Governments of U.A.E., Singapore, South Africa and Zambia and the authorities of Taiwan to take necessary steps to prevent their countries from serving as entrepots for illegally obtained rhino horn.
2. Urge the authorities of Taiwan to prohibit export of traditional medicines which are stated to contain rhino products.
3. Request all CITES Parties to prohibit the import of medicines which are stated to contain rhino products.
4. Request all nations, especially the Republic of Korea, China, Singapore and Thailand, and the region of Taiwan, in which rhino products are traded internally, to implement laws to prohibit the trade. Such prohibitions should establish a timetable in which existing stocks can be depleted. (Resolution Conf. 6.10 on the Trade in Rhinoceros Products urged all Parties to introduce a complete prohibition on all sales and trade, internal and international, of rhinoceros parts and derivatives, especially horn.)
5. Promote actively all nations in which rhino products are consumed to substitute alternative products such as water buffalo horn or saiga antelope horn in products imported, exported or consumed locally.
6. Consider destroying certain official stockpiles of rhino horn (with or without compensation), since over the past few years some has been stolen from African government storerooms and illegally sold.
7. Identify the main illegal traders (middlemen) handling rhinoceros products, and use appropriate means to put them out of business.
8. Continue to improve management procedures for the remaining rhino populations in Africa and Asia such as by expanding breeding programmes, increasing guard patrols, electrifying fences for rhino enclosure where necessary and feasible, and increasing both investigative police activities to obtain information on poachers and middlemen and penalties for violation of existing wildlife laws.