

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



Seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Johannesburg (South Africa), 24 September – 5 October 2016

RATIONALE FOR SWAZILAND'S PROPOSAL TO CITES TO LEGALIZE TRADE IN ITS RHINO HORN

This document has been submitted by Swaziland, in relation to amendment proposal CoP17 Prop. 7*.

* *The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat (or the United Nations Environment Programme) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.*

“BANNING THE BAN”

A poem by “Last Man Standing” Ntokozo Mdluli, of Elangeni Community, Swaziland

*Nature conservation
Is a mature decision
A safeguarding action
To what's treasure to the nation.
The ground and what surrounds
Ecosystem is a chain, one link missing is a shame,
But who is to blame?*

*Let's reason with the reasons –
The statistics in the prisons
The ratio of births and deaths over seasons
And evaluate the gain there is in
Banning the ban.*

*The Big Five are like fingers in a human hand
Each one has a duty even if the owner doesn't understand
But now the situation at hand
Tells us we are about to lose a finger from that hand –
That is also an important figure amongst the Five.*

*If experience is a great teacher
Then we have seen everything clearer
Lives have been lost
Of rhinos and men –
The saddest thing is knowing you fight but your battle's a loss
And we know that selling would ensure life doesn't become part of the cost
Of these precious rhinos and men.
But the most positive gain is that the horn grows again,
Yet that which has been killed can never be brought to life again.*

*Tell the tale, sell in sales, pay for the pains
of those who work hard to conserve what they deserve.
Blow the horn, make the right noise
For one which grows from the nose of the rhinoceros
Let it be sold in kilos just to reward the heroes.*

*Let's reason with the reasons
The statistics in the prisons
The ratio of births to deaths over the seasons
Evaluate the gain there is in
Banning the ban.*

*We can cite the flaws from the declaration of CITES
That's why now we recite and flow verses like
BANNING THE BAN.*

THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND'S PROPOSAL TO CITES **TO LEGALIZE TRADE IN ITS RHINO HORN**

Swaziland has submitted a proposal to the 17th Conference of Parties to CITES to alter the existing annotation on its Appendix II listing of Swaziland's southern white rhino, adopted at CoP13 in 2004, so as to permit a limited and regulated legal trade in white rhino horn. Proceeds from the sale of 330 kg of horn stock will be placed in a conservation endowment fund to yield an estimated annual income of \$600,000, and in addition 20 kg of horn from natural deaths and harvesting will generate another \$600,000 per annum, providing an estimated **sustainable** annual income of \$1,2 million.

A trading partner will be sought if Swaziland's proposal is approved. All horn will carry a DNA signature and trade will be strictly controlled with only one supplier. Buyers will be limited to one or two licenced traders or consumers annually.

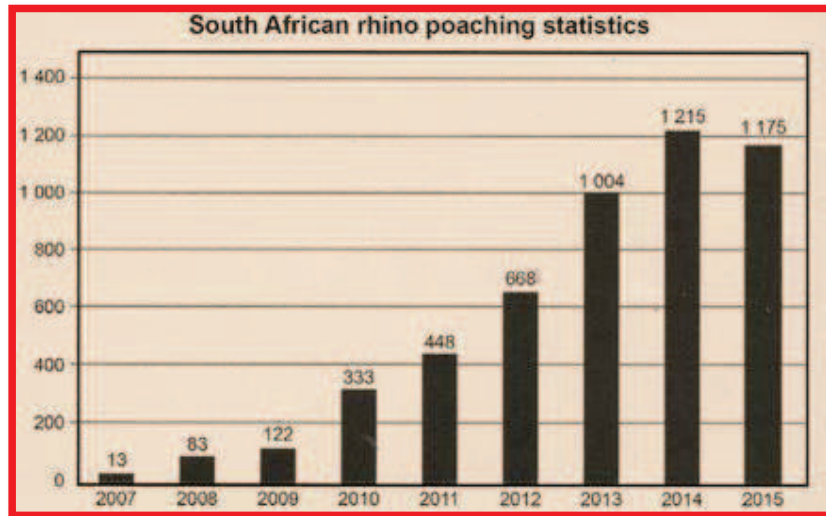
Motive

Swaziland's proposal to open legal trade in its rhino horn is aimed solely at **finding a solution to the plight of rhinos** – nothing more. Its **motive is purely rhino survival**. The sale of horn will simply enable the financing necessary to meet the rapidly escalating costs of protecting rhinos, which are fast becoming too costly and too risky to keep. Proceeds from horn sales will also provide for a host of other important conservation and community needs, while benefitting a wide diversity of other wildlife species as well. The entire process resonates perfectly with the very principles of Nature conservation, as espoused by the IUCN and the World Conservation Strategy.



*Rhino losses from poaching now exceed their birth rate –
they are on the road to extinction, with no effective strategy in place for their survival.
Swaziland aims to change this.*

Recorded rhino poaching losses in South Africa alone 2007-2015



Rhino horn is more valuable than gold...

Gold is finite and can only be mined once.

***Horn keeps growing on living rhinos which produce young –
making rhino horn a self-renewing natural resource that is
MUCH more valuable than gold.***

NOTE : All photographs taken on Big Game Parks in Swaziland unless otherwise stated.

The pragmatic, common sense rationale for legal trade in rhino horn

Swaziland, and the majority of other African rhino custodians, strongly advocate for opening the legal trade in rhino horn for good reason:

- **The ban on legal trade has been in place for 39 years and it is still not working.** Just as the ban is not working, so is the precautionary approach not working. Both are failed strategies; it makes no sense to persist with failed strategies.

Is there a single ban with a lucrative black market option that has ever worked?

- **Criminals are taking 100% of the proceeds from illegal horn sales, while rhino custodians are paying 100% of the costs of production and protection,** yet rhino custodians are in desperate need of money to fund rapidly increasing costs of protection.
- **The best way to emasculate criminals is to decriminalize their contraband.**
- Bans create and incentivize black markets; legalizing trade would have the reverse effect.
- The all-illegal trade in rhino horn is rampant regardless of the ban on legal trade.
- A legal trade will compete with the illegal trade, and money legally earned will go to custodians and not to the criminals, so reducing an unfair disparity.
- **With the ban in place, illegal trade makes dead rhinos more valuable than live rhinos. Legal trade would reverse this and make live rhinos more valuable than dead rhinos.**
- The horns of live rhinos grow back after harvesting, making legal harvesting self-sustaining. In fact rhinos themselves are self-sustaining natural resources (they breed) and so are their horns (which keep growing).
- The ban is **preventing** the sensible legal utilization of a valuable self-generating natural resource thus **contradicting the very concept and meaning of conservation. The ban is not preventing its illegal utilization but supporting it.**
- Supply and demand can be controlled by price (we all want a Rolls Royce but very few of us can afford one).
- A rhino without a horn is not the rhino we all want to see, but it is at least a live rhino, and a live rhino is also a breeding rhino and surely a live, hornless, breeding rhino is better than a dead rhino or no rhino at all? Swaziland's proposal to CITES does not preclude rhinos with their horns intact – that option will always be part of the mix.
- **Trade in rhino horn is only wrong because CITES has criminalized it** and member states have the capacity to decriminalize it.

Of course illegal trade of anything is wrong. But **legal trade is right.** We do not criminalize the legal use of money because criminals steal it and illegally launder it; nor do we outlaw the legal trade in diamonds because criminals steal them and reduce them to “blood diamonds”. So why ban legal trade in the most valuable self-renewing natural resource on earth when this could finance the protection of rhinos and other urgent needs, **without killing a single rhino?**

- **The CITES ban on trade in rhino horn is working against rhino survival** at a time when rhinos are more threatened than ever – and when **rhino custodians have started to give up on rhino conservation** because its cost is escalating beyond affordability and it is no longer worth the risk.
- **Proceeds from the sale of horn can enable financial independence, which is overridingly important to enhance resistance to ever present corruptive influences, and remove dependence on donor funding. African rhino range states have the assets to make this possible – all they need is legality to use them.**
- **African rhinos belong to Africa and should benefit those countries in Africa which successfully protect them rather than benefit foreign criminal syndicates.**

The allegation that opening the trade for one country will facilitate illegal horn from other countries entering the legal market is simplistic. Of course it will to the extent that it is allowed to do so. The truth is, the horn trade is already rampant and **nothing – not even the UN – will save any country's rhinos if the country in question cannot save its own rhinos.**

Swaziland is well placed to pilot and test a legal rhino horn trade option. It is a small country with all its rhinos being controlled by one strictly disciplined conservation agency, which has an exemplary record in rhino protection due to effective security measures that are strongly backed by political will at the highest levels.



Dr. Anton Rupert presenting to Swaziland's Chief Game Ranger, Petros Ngomane, the Rupert Foundation's Gold Medal for outstanding service to Nature conservation.

“Petros, it is people like you who give me hope for the future of the world.”

- Dr. Anton Rupert, Stellenbosch, August 1990

Ranger Petros Ngomane gave 44 years of loyal service. He survived two attempted assassinations. First, stabbed eight times in the chest by a poacher he tried to arrest and was left for dead with perforated lungs. Then a petrol bomb thrown into his bedroom as he slept, after being recognized when he infiltrated a rhino crime syndicate.



Swaziland's Head of State, His Majesty King Mswati III, has very deservedly been twice decorated internationally for his commitment to Nature conservation, with the Golden Ark Award by Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, and the 2015 World Rhino Award for Political and Judicial Support.



A myriad of wildlife species will benefit from the proceeds of the sale of rhino horn.



The Kingdom of Swaziland's
BIG GAME PARKS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE AUTHORITY

MISSION STATEMENT

*Parks are not only for wildlife,
Parks are also for people.*

*Believing that one without the other
is a recipe for poverty,
the mission of Big Game Parks is:*

*To promote environmental literacy;
to develop, conserve and expand
her land base to increase scale, ecological
viability and protected biodiversity;*

*To achieve and sustain optimal economic
viability in order to facilitate a safe and secure
future for Swaziland's historically beleaguered
wildlife within representative habitats;*

*To promote and to marry ecotourism
with all other ethical components
of environmentally friendly land use and to
develop these collectively as justification
against contesting land use*

*To uphold and sustain the highest levels of
conservation integrity, discipline, conservation
ethics and the rule of law as necessary
elements to conserve nature and natural resources;*

*To propound the necessity for limits to growth,
thereby keeping options open for a better
quality of life for future generations
of wildlife and people.*

To serve our King and Country with honour, integrity and loyalty.

Swazi Nature conservation in perspective

In Swaziland we are blessed with wildlife being considered so important as to be placed under the portfolio of the highest Authority in the land, to the envy of many conservation agencies across the continent.

The Kingdom of Swaziland's Big Game Parks (BGP) is a non-profit Trust which is mandated to administer and manage Swaziland's Wildlife and Flora Act, and to represent the Kingdom on all fora of CITES and on all matters relating to national wildlife and Nature conservation.

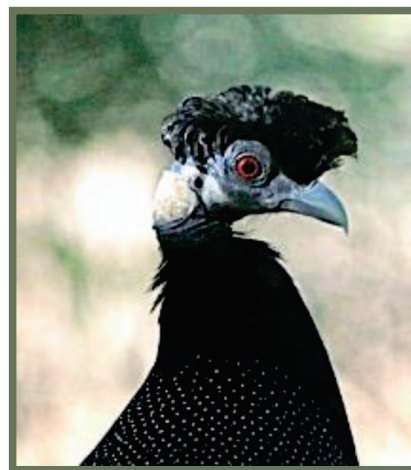
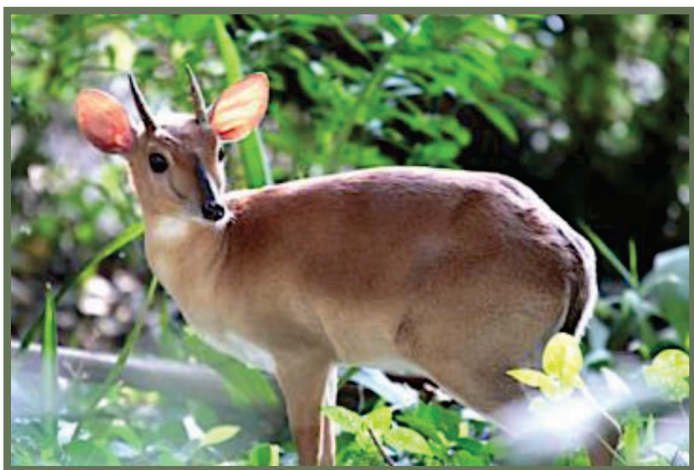
BGP has been remarkably successful in restoring and conserving the Kingdom's wildlife resources including its rhinos, which enjoy optimal habitat and protection.

Only three rhinos have been lost to poaching in Swaziland in the last 24 years, made possible by what is probably the strongest legislation in Africa, enforced by highly dedicated Game Rangers, a supportive Police force and an effective, well rewarded information network.

BGP has also miraculously achieved economic independence from its own self-generated revenues, so enabling it to resist corruptive influences. Revenue is earned mainly from tourism (56% local) and self-renewing natural resource sales, but BGP has chosen to forego the potentially most lucrative source of sport and trophy hunting. BGP parks are open to the general public at all income levels, and they underpin the country's flourishing tourism industry.

These achievements have been legitimately earned from the genesis of Nature conservation in Swaziland over a period of nearly 60 years by practising integrity, discipline, a zero tolerance for crime, pragmatic conservation with a strict code of ethics, and above all, by the unfailing support of Swaziland's Head of State, His Majesty King Mswati III, his father before him, the Head of Government, and by Parliament – all of whom provide the enabling environment to apply the law without fear of favour.

Traditionally and culturally, wildlife is vested in the King in trust for the nation. The King has seen fit to allow those who invest in, and care for wildlife to profit by doing so, for the greater good of Swaziland's wildlife estate.



Photograph by Dr. George Hughes

The lives of smaller creatures also matter and they add to biodiversity

Why the Swaziland rhino horn trade proposal?

Swaziland was expecting South Africa, who is the world's largest rhino custodian, to submit a rhino horn trade proposal to CoP17 and stood ready to support it. However, Swaziland was informed on 21st April, 2016 that this was not going to happen. That decision gave rise to the submission of Swaziland's proposal at the 11th hour, for the following reasons:

- Swaziland believes implicitly that legalizing the trade in horn is a valid and viable option to be tried to save rhinos from extinction, following the failure of the 39 year old ban imposed by CITES in 1977.
- Rhinos are in crisis and, at their current rate of demise, there may not be the time left for the continued survival of rhinos if we have to wait another three years for CITES CoP18 before addressing their plight at international level. In Swaziland's opinion, to do nothing (the precautionary approach) is no longer an option.
- **Rhinos may well be much closer to the threshold of extinction than we think.** The official statistics on surviving rhinos may be overstated, particularly considering the predicted losses of white rhino from the current ongoing severe drought in south eastern Africa, where **the bulk of the world's rhino populations** occur. Also, rhino loss statistics from poaching reflect minimum numbers – they do not include undiscovered carcasses nor unreported mortalities, nor those of young rhinos which are completely devoured in areas supporting large predators.

Swaziland lodged its proposal in order to keep options open for a debate on trade in horn at CoP17, and also to enable the **conservation message** to reach the world in competition to the **preservation message**, the latter having been so successfully and misleadingly marketed by **certain** animal rights activists, whose businesses depend on crises and donor funding.

Swaziland is concerned at the growing corruption of the meaning of the word “**conservation**” which, in the context of wildlife, is defined as **the wise and sustainable use of self-renewing natural resources – both consumptive and non-consumptive**. There is a growing Western stigma developing against consumptive utilization of wild natural resources, piloted by some activists. Over the years, the concept of **conservation** has replaced **preservation** (which now more appropriately belongs in museums) but world opinion, in response to extensive global propaganda by donor dependent activists, is now causing a reversal of its meaning back towards preservation.

Swaziland sees the erosion of **true conservation** as **an increasingly serious threat to Africa's wildlife**. If this creeping tendency back towards “**preservation**” (non-consumptive use) is allowed to take hold, Swaziland believes the value of natural resources will diminish to the growing detriment of Nature conservation in Africa. This is seen as central to the question of trade in rhino horn and is therefore put forward for consideration at CoP17.



*The horn that Nature provided to this rhino cow
to protect her young
is now the greatest threat
to her calf's, and her own, survival.*



Africa's critically endangered black rhino.

In 1960 it is said there were 100,000. Now there are only about 5,000 – a loss of 95%.

THE BAN IS NOT WORKING – it's time for change

The ban on rhino horn trade was imposed by CITES in 1977 during the preservation era. From that time, the concept of preservation evolved into conservation, implying management towards sustainable utilization of natural resources. "Conservation" was defined and widely adopted internationally, yet the ban has remained in force, preventing the full practice of conservation, in spite of the ban's ongoing failure.

The ban has been in force for 39 years and it is clearly not working for rhinos. It is however working for criminals and donor dependant activists, while poaching deaths are relentlessly driving rhinos towards extinction. After **four decades** of futility, it is surely time to realize that **the CITES ban is counter-productive and is working against rhinos and contributing to their demise.** It is aptly said that:

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result."

The ban simply sent the trade underground enriching only the illegal black market and the "Donate Now" activist brigade.

Prohibition of liquor in the USA was also a hopeless failure except for the criminals it enriched – the solution was legalizing the trade in liquor.

To continue with the ban is not **conservation** by any stretch of the imagination and persisting with the precautionary approach may well be at the cost of rhino survival.

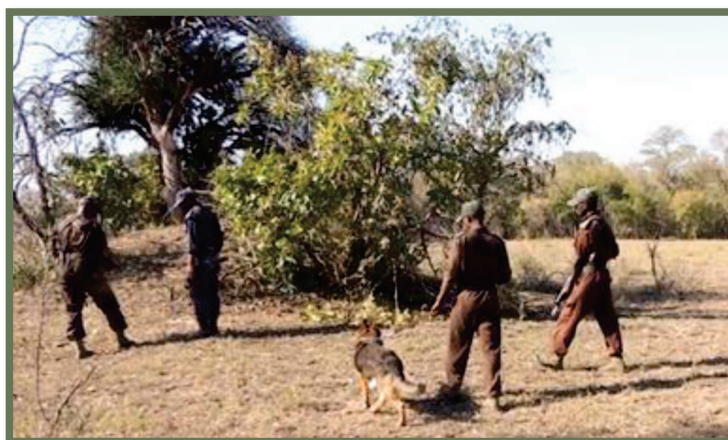
Demand reduction and education, cited by anti-trade activists as **new** measures to be tried, are not new at all. They are integral to the ban and have been tried since the ban was put in place but rhino poaching graphs show that they have not been effective. To propose them as new options is to deliberately cloud, confuse and distort the issue.

At CoP10 in 1997, when South Africa proposed a trade in rhino horn, a main concern raised was that **“a legal trade will undermine the progress made by Parties in reducing demand for rhinoceros horn”**. What progress? What reduction? Statistics of rhino losses from poaching in the 19 years following CoP10 prove that demand reduction efforts have been a spectacular failure. Those who may claim a reduction in poaching is due to their success at demand reduction should consider that the fewer rhinos there are, the harder it is to find them.

Swaziland would question another contentious point about “demand reduction”. Who are we to tell those who believe in Eastern traditional medicine that it doesn't work? It is common cause that what works in the mind also works in body and soul – religion is a good example of this. You will never persuade Africans who believe in African traditional medicines that they do not work for them. Nor Asians that Eastern traditional medicines do not work for those who believe in them. It is the height of arrogance to equate rhino horn to fingernails and disparagingly label what Westerners do not understand, as fictitious.

Some anti-trade advocates suggest the solution to be to **“crush the crime of poaching”**. This is naïve and unrealistic. Poaching is a crime and in all of mankind's history crime has not been eliminated. We have had national Police forces employed to deal with it since the advent of law enforcement and still we live with crime so it is a pipedream to suggest that we can eliminate poaching, especially when the black market is so lucrative.

It is not the CITES ban that has saved Swaziland's rhinos, and nor is it armchair preservationists or anti-trade activists. It is the men and women on the ground, serving beyond the call of duty, who have protected Swaziland's rhinos so successfully for the last 24 years, with the solid backing of Swaziland's political leadership, a supporting Police force and appropriate legislation. In reality, the anti-conservation / pro-preservation sector is influencing member states to **unwittingly compromise rhino survival**, by supporting CITES' constraints which **prevent** the ability of rhino range states to finance their rhino protection programs from their own sovereign self-renewing natural resources.



Tracker dogs are an added deterrent to poachers

The Rangers who go out every day and night, come rain or sunshine and risk life and limb to protect Africa's rhinos, are often an unappreciated force in the daily hype created around rhino conservation. These men take the brunt of the escalating conflict and remain the true heroes in the fight of life and death in remote places.

Loss of rhino range – a growing trend, which legal trade would reverse

Effective rhino conservation today costs big money. The current regional estimate of cost for protection is more than **\$3,500** per rhino per annum.

Protecting rhinos has now become so costly and risky that 70 of South Africa's 400 private rhino owners have discarded their rhinos. This amounts to 200,000 hectares being withdrawn from rhino conservation with a loss of habitat equating to a carrying capacity of some 2,500 rhinos. Such loss of rhino habitat cannot be afforded when more than 30% of the world's white rhinos are in the custodianship of South Africa's private rhino owners – and when **Southern Africa is custodian to over 90% of the world's white rhinos.**

Habitats are primary; the animals that occupy them are secondary. It is easy to restore animals to natural habitats, but once they are converted to industrial development or human settlement they are gone from Nature forever.

Legal Trade

Opening legal trade would immediately compete with the illegal trade and whatever legal revenue accrues to custodians will be unavailable to the criminals, reducing illicit profits and financially strengthening protection. **This is the turnabout we need.** It would also restore the right of sovereign range states to legally utilize their own sovereign resources.

Swaziland is not suggesting imposing its views on legalizing its own horn on other custodian countries who do not wish to do so with theirs. As a sovereign state, Swaziland recognizes and respects the sovereignty of all other sovereign states and expects the same in return. All that Swaziland is asking for is to legalize the trade for its **own rhino horn**, to finance the protection of its own rhinos and spread benefits to its own communities. Swaziland would of course support those custodians who wish their horn trade to be legalized too.

If legal trade works for Swaziland, it could provide the solution for conserving the species in those countries which have the political will to protect their rhinos – and profits will incentivise that will. That cultures and circumstances differ from place to place is acknowledged but the model could be adapted accordingly. If political will to acquire and conserve rhinos comes to former range states which have lost their rhinos and which still have habitats to accommodate them, rhinos can be sourced from states which have successfully protected and grown their own populations, as South Africa did for many of us. Of the 33 former African rhino range states, only 11 currently have rhinos, and of these 11, only five still have their original rhinos. The other six, starting with Swaziland in 1965, have had their rhinos restored from South African sources.



The first native born rhino calf for 80 years, was born in Swaziland in 1968. Her mother was one of the first group of surplus rhinos to be distributed from Zululand to re-establish the species in Swaziland.

The Economic Imperative – MONEY MATTERS



Spiritual values which exist in all decent people are valid and they fortify the passion and commitment needed to care for wildlife – but they do not finance rhino conservation.

By example, a leadwood tree (*Combretum imberbe*) is also a natural resource, but because it is so slow growing, to all intents and purposes, it cannot realistically be regarded as a renewable natural resource for sustainable use over a short span of time.

Yet, the significance to conservation in Swaziland of a certain leadwood tree, carbon dated by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) at 1,050 years of age, is reflected in the priority given to Hlane Royal National Park as a protected area, over sugar development. At the time of dating, that leadwood had stood as a dead tree in a fire climax savanna for 150 years – before white man arrived in Swaziland. As a dead tree it had survived five Swazi kings who had come and gone while this tree stood as a skeleton on the veld. It had germinated at the time of Alfred the Great and was already 700 years old when the Swazi nation was born.

A bulldozer can uproot and destroy this 1,000 years of rich Swazi natural history in a matter of moments. This was the argument put to King Sobhuza II in defence of Hlane when the mighty sugar industry wanted to replace the park's savanna lands and forests with sugar plantations. King Sobhuza II told the sugar developers to look elsewhere for sugar lands, emphatically endorsing the validity of spiritual values. We applaud the power of spiritual values, and had no shame in using them to save the Hlane Royal National Park from sugar.

But sadly, spiritual values and emotion alone do not finance Nature conservation – only hard cash can do that. As the late Dr Anton Rupert, the great South African industrialist, philanthropist and conservationist used to say:

“Conservation without finance is merely conversation”.

There must be profit in any worthwhile endeavour, otherwise what would be the purpose of such endeavour? Spiritual profit is perfectly valid if it can be afforded. In the case of rhinos, the economic imperative must be added to the conservation imperative in order to finance their conservation; it is just too expensive to rely on spiritual values alone.

Conservation implies management and whether we like it or not, in today's world wildlife **management is an imperative**. It is also an extremely **costly imperative, which has to be financed**. Good conservation produces surpluses. It is the wise and sensible utilization of these surpluses which can pay for their management if it is not outlawed.

We concede that money is indeed the root of all evil. But we cannot do without it. We cannot eat without it and we certainly cannot conserve without it. Nor can we protect rhinos without it. The economic imperative is real. It is what the world lives by. It is real even to those who disparagingly and emotionally accuse conservationists who are protagonists of legal rhino horn trade of doing so solely for financial profit.

It is illogical for those activists who are in conflict with consumptive conservation, to demonize the purpose of self-generated revenues and those who produce them, and would use them to protect their rhinos and finance their conservation agencies. It is also unreasonable and unfair of them to demonize custodians who believe in consumptive utilization, many of whom have a long history of unquestioned integrity and who are passionate in their belief in Nature conservation.

It is after all these custodians who stand between rhinos and criminal syndicates - and it is these custodians who provide the world with rhinos to see.

Pragmatic conservation may well be the only remaining way to go. It has worked for Swaziland without sport and trophy hunting, both of which are lethal. So surely the rhino horn trade option should at least be tested because it could well provide the solution to keeping rhinos alive. Even trophy hunting of rhinos would give way to harvesting horn from live rhinos because living rhinos would become more profitable than dead ones.

At peace with onlookers while suckling a young calf



Rhinos are a major drawcard for tourism to Africa.

Tourism is the largest and fastest growing (legal) industry in the world.

***It is non-extractive – people come to look and pay for looking,
taking away nothing but memories,
leaving behind the wildlife resource to be paid for again and again –***

***but the revenues from passive tourism and non-consumptive use of natural resources
are not enough to cover the escalating cost of rhino protection.***

RHINO CONSERVATION COSTS ARE HUGE - IN MONEY AND HUMAN LIFE

REALITY IN THE BUSH FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW IT....

Rhino range states are up against unscrupulous criminals carrying weapons of war, used without hesitation on rhinos and Rangers alike.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC SABOTAGE



MTHONDVO – the last Swazi rhino to be slain during the Swazi rhino war of 1988-1992.

In life, this magnificent bull was the most photographed rhino in Swaziland. His pictures, taken by thousands of enthusiastic tourists, have spread to every corner of the globe.

He was vulnerably trusting and allowed his killers to come up close, as he always did with tourists.

Mthondvo was in the prime of his life and he didn't want to die – as was clearly demonstrated by the many futile attempts he made to escape his assassins after they sprayed him with burst after burst of AK47 automatic fire.....

This living rhino was darted with an immobilizing drug to avoid detection from the sound of gunfire. When the effects of the drug wore off he regained full consciousness with half his face gone...



The above two photographs were taken in South Africa, used by courtesy of Dr William Fowlds



A Senior Game Ranger as he was found after he went missing, deep in the bush with his head hacked open by poachers with a machete. Though he was armed, his constraint in using his gun cost him his life. He died with his boots on in defence of his country's wildlife heritage, as several other Game Rangers have done. He left a wife and two young children for BGP to assist through school.

More than 1,000 Game Rangers have paid with their lives for protecting rhinos and elephants in Africa – six of them were Swazis. These fallen heroes were fathers of children, husbands of wives, friends of friends and breadwinners of families. They were all underpaid, overworked, committed beyond the call of duty and they made the ultimate sacrifice for protecting the most valuable self-renewing natural resource on earth, rendered valueless by CITES. We surely cannot allow their deaths to have been in vain?

And the greatest concern of Game Rangers today is not being killed by poachers or snakebite – it is facing murder charges for doing their national duty. This is an indictment on society.

***THIS IS WHAT RHINO CUSTODIANS ARE CONSTANTLY UP AGAINST –
BIG MONEY IS NEEDED TO WIN A BIG AND BRUTAL WAR***



In the Swaziland lowveld the worst drought in living memory is heading into its third year now, and enormous quantities of hay have had to be imported at huge cost from South Africa and stockpiled to keep Swaziland's white rhinos alive.



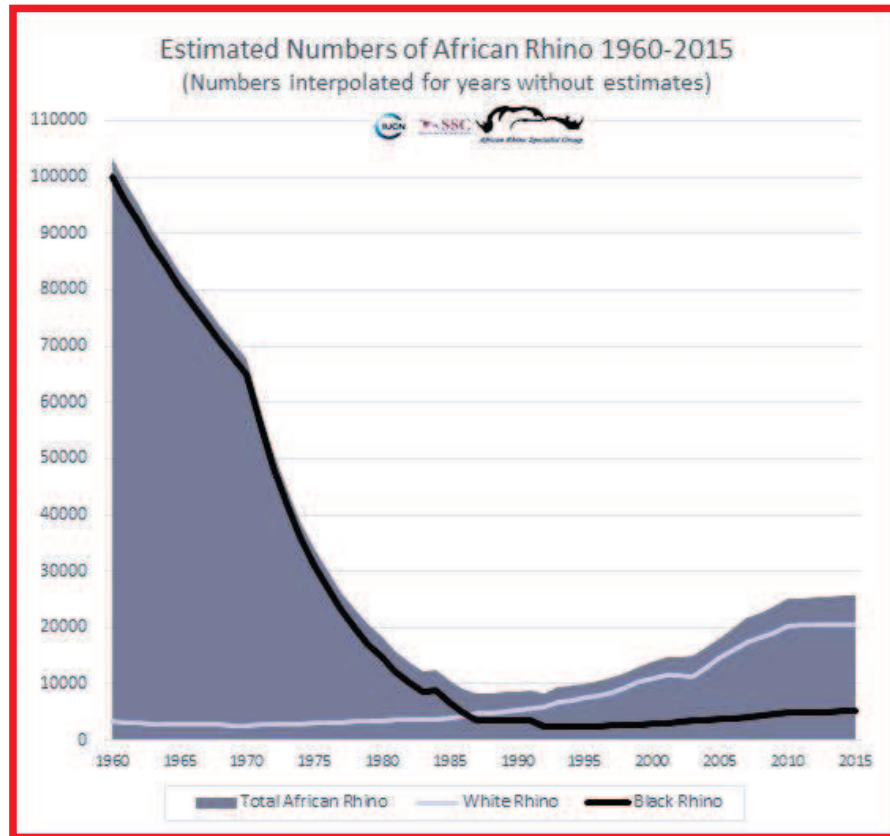
Baby rhinos orphaned by their mothers' milk drying up in the drought and found in time to save them. In purchased feed alone, each calf will cost \$12,000 to raise before it is weaned.

It is the caretakers who are saving the orphaned rhinos, not CITES regulations.



BOYS IN THE BUSH – it is up to our generation to ensure the future of these youngsters.

**Data provided by the IUCN Species Survival Commission's
African Rhino Specialist Group**



After a remarkable recovery of southern white rhino from the brink of extinction thanks to the successful conservation efforts of South Africa, this population is now back on the decline. Swaziland believes that losses from poaching this year may pale in comparison to drought related deaths, and that the species may be in much greater peril than is realised.

These are the brave men on whom the future of Africa's rhinos depends.

It is crucial that they are properly rewarded for the dangerous and demanding contributions they make to rhino survival.

Photograph by Peter Chadwick





There will always be lions in Africa as long as we conserve them and allow their spiritual values to be balanced by their material values.



Ancient hardwoods too strong to push over are simply ring-barked and killed.

Elephants are not an endangered species.

They are rare or absent only in those range states which have failed to look after them. In countries which have successfully protected them they produce surpluses and become problem animals, unless their numbers are controlled.

The first obvious casualties in habitats overcrowded with elephants are mature trees, including ancient hardwoods which harbour tree nesting vultures, a host of hole nesting creatures and critically endangered black rhinos which are easily outcompeted by elephants.

Elephants reduce biodiversity when their numbers are allowed to grow beyond the carrying capacity of finite habitats.

Conservation / sustainable utilization (both consumptive and non-consumptive) / commercialization = the best recipe for SUCCESS

Sustainable utilization and commercialization of rare species has enhanced the survival chances of many such species. The southern white rhino was one of them and it **was brought back from near extinction** in the last century, **increasing from less than 50 animals to 20,000 as a direct result of conservation and commercialisation.**

In sharp contrast to the **conservation** success story of the southern white rhino, the northern white rhino, which existed in greater numbers than the southern white rhino 50 years ago, is **all but extinct** with a population of three non-viable animals. The recent **extinction** of the west African subspecies *Diceros bicornis longepese* is another case in point.

The late Dr. Ian Player, a globally respected South African Nature conservationist, was instrumental in the wider distribution and commercialisation of the southern white rhino, whose numbers grew from 600 to 20,000 animals during his lifetime. Had it not been for his foresight and wisdom, in all likelihood there would be no white rhinos to argue about today. Player promoted and practiced the sustainable consumptive utilization of the white rhino as a natural resource to enhance its value, for it was that value, he believed, which would ultimately determine whether white rhino would survive for posterity. In the eve of his life **Ian Player advocated strongly and publicly in favour of lifting the ban on trade in rhino horn to enhance the legal values and survival chances of white rhinos.**

It is not bans but **conservation** and commercialization that saved the southern white rhino, ostrich and crocodile from near extinction in Africa. The same is true of the vicuna of South America and other species as well.

Comparative examples of the **successes of consumptive conservation** over the **failures of preservation** are clearly visible where they have been applied in Africa. In Kenya where **preservation** has been practiced over time (with bans on consumptive use) wildlife has **declined by up to 80% over the past 40 years**, while in southern Africa, where the **conservation** model has been followed with ownership, consumptive use and commercialization, the wildlife estate has **grown by more than three times over the same period of time.**

Sustainable consumptive utilization should not be seen as the monstrous practise some academic activists would have the world believe. After all, we generate and utilize surpluses of cattle, goats, sheep, and chickens, impala, wildebeest, blesbok and warthogs – all unquestionably natural resources – so what earthly reason can there be for excluding elephants and rhinos when good conservation of these species generates surpluses beyond the carrying capacities of finite habitats which support them? If we do not utilize these surpluses, overcrowding results, compromising capital stocks of animal populations and the biodiversity of their habitats, so placing at risk a wide diversity of species of both fauna and flora and the habitats themselves.

Farming rhinos too, is a sensible option which should not be stigmatized and compromised when considered against the fact that no domesticated animal has ever gone extinct. Legally harvesting horn without killing rhinos has to be better than illegal horn which results in rhinos dying. **Ownership encourages investment and profits fortify defence of the asset.**



AFRICAN RHINO ASSETS BELONG TO AFRICA

Rhino horn is arguably the most valuable commodity on earth and constitutes a potentially massive financial asset belonging to rhino range states. It has enormous scope to not only fund Nature conservation but also to contribute meaningfully to poverty alleviation and sustainable development, yet CITES is preventing this from happening legally.

There is not one single conservation agency in Africa which is not cash strapped and underfunded. Africa's Game Rangers too are grossly underpaid for the dangerous work they do and the long hours of discomfort they endure at the poaching coalface. When Rangers are compromised by the promise of greater rewards from illicit sources, the animals in their care are doomed.

And yet in April 2016, the world saw **US\$170 million** worth of ivory and horn set alight and go up in smoke in Kenya, ostensibly to send a message to consumers and criminals, that utilizing these resources is wrong. What do criminals care about such messages except to rejoice at the escalation in value of their contraband which is what happens when rare resources become scarcer? What is the difference between burning \$170 million worth of self-renewing natural resources and taking \$170 million in cash out of the bank and throwing it all on the fire? And this in the face of impoverished communities – millions of poor people, all with families to feed and educate and clothe, and with criminal temptations to resist.

Hungry people cannot ever be expected to understand or accept such **extravagantly wasteful destruction of such valuable natural resources, which belong to Africa and are being squandered by foreign influence**. There is nothing to be proud of about this. Nor will **real conservationists** ever understand such extravagance in the face of conservation agencies being unable to make ends meet. Such senseless extravagance may resonate with affluent, misinformed societies who have been influenced by activists, but never with poor hungry people or needy conservationists.

Quite apart from the very real probability of DNA evidence against traffickers and poachers being destroyed by burning stockpiles of ivory and horn, it makes no sense to devalue Africa's legitimately generated conservation resources. There is also no sensible need **for rhino range states, who own the most valued self-renewing resource on earth – rhino horn** – to be short of funds or to be donor dependant.

Also illogical is the disparity in CITES voting rights, with 171 member states who do not have rhinos, dictating the destiny of rhinos to those states which do have rhinos, and who pay the very substantial human and economic costs of protecting them. This is seen as interference in the management integrity of sovereign states over their own resources. How sovereign states manage their own rhinos should be their own sovereign prerogative.

CITES was conceived by its founding member states to help nations control illegal cross border trade. It surely cannot possibly have been conceived in order to restrain sovereign states from legally utilizing their own resources, so **preventing the functions of conservation** being practiced on the wildlife they own? Yet that is exactly what is happening. Furthermore the sovereign states referred to above acceded in good faith to the CITES ban in rhino horn trade to help save rhinos. They did not anticipate the ban ultimately working against rhinos and have since been more than patiently tolerant of continuing with the precautionary approach for so long in the face of its failure to fulfil its purpose. It is time to correct this and member states have the power to do so.

African rhinos belong to Africa and they should surely benefit those countries in Africa which own them and successfully protect them, rather than benefit foreign criminal syndicates and money hungry opportunists.



More than \$170 million worth of Africa's conservation resources going up in smoke... Kenya, 30 April 2016. (Picture sourced on the internet)

The negative influence of certain activists on the wildlife of Africa

Swaziland is concerned at the increasingly negative impact some activists are having on the policies and practices of Nature conservation in Africa. Being iconic animals, rhino and elephant are a focus of attention, with serious implications for their future.

On the question of trade in ivory and rhino horn, the anti-trade activists have thoroughly outsmarted the pro-trade protagonists with their marketing skills by targeting international iconic figures who influence the world, while the pro-trade custodians have been preoccupied with defending themselves and their rhinos. High profile publicity campaigns, often featuring global celebrities, advertise their propaganda using slogans which are now echoed in the Western world like “*Don’t buy rhino horn – just chew your fingernails*” and “*The only valuable horn is the one on a living rhino*” – forgetting that it is that very value that is the **cause** of the deaths of those living rhinos.

In Ian Player’s words “**these famous people have been misinformed**” – they have listened to only one side of the story and are accepting the views of activists who do not live with the day to day realities on the ground, who do not face the grave dangers of protecting rhinos in the bush, who do not cover the enormous costs necessary to protect them and who are not accountable for the results.

Certain world conservation bodies who should be vocal on the philosophy of conservation and sustainable utilization, are notably silent on the question of legalizing the trade in rhino horn and ivory, so opening the way for preservation to gain increasing prominence. Donor dependant agencies are beholden to their donors, who in turn are influenced by activists – and so the **real conservation** ethic erodes.

There is growing concern that even CITES is falling prey to this erosion, to the detriment of wild species of fauna and flora. This gives rise to a very serious question: is CITES still serving the best interests of species survival (and indeed Nature conservation generally) or is it being hijacked to serve the agendas and financial interests of certain powerful NGOs whose economies are best supported by perpetuating crises? These questions are being asked and discussed increasingly in conservation circles.

It is no secret that certain animals rights organizations have become wealthy and powerful on donor money and their influence on governments against consumptive utilization, particularly hunting and the trade in ivory and rhino horn, has in some cases been successful. Some of the funding provided by these wealthy activist organizations is **conditionally** available only to those recipients who agree to practice non-consumptive utilization of natural resources – the analogy being “**He who pays the piper calls the tune**”. This amounts to infringement on the management integrity of sovereign states and even carries a connotation of corruption. BGP has experienced such conditional offers of monetary assistance and fortunately has been able to afford to resist them because they are seen as infringement on management integrity.

On the softer side, Glen Martin's words in his book “*The Game Changer*” are appropriate:

*“The impulses driving animals’ rights are laudable. But animals’ rights cannot be conflated with conservation – they are different things. Africa is not a Disney movie and the African lion will not be saved by good intentions. **Animal rights activists are being led astray by their hearts. They need to start using their heads.**”*

But the question persists:

*Is it really in the financial interests of **certain** donor dependant activists to find a solution to the plight of rhinos when finding one would remove some glamorous projects from their portfolios which create a very fertile and lucrative fund raising platform that provides them with their comfortable lifestyles, worldwide travel and the high profile kudos that goes with it?*

These activists continue to impose their foreign values and influence on Africa. Yet their doctrine is anti-conservation; it is not in Africa's best financial interests and it also fortifies Africa's dependence on foreign aid. Preventing the proliferation of such invasive interference is overdue because it devalues Africa's wildlife and is harmful to its future. It is time to confront the negative influence of some animal rights activists head on, and to restore and embrace the true conservation ethos adopted by the IUCN for a World Conservation Strategy that was composed by conservationists.

BGP hastens to add that there are many NGOs sincerely committed to the welfare of animals, with little regard for personal financial returns. They generously support wildlife projects in Africa and we do not question their motives or their integrity. BGP itself is a grateful beneficiary of several such NGOs and individuals who do not impose unpalatable conditions on their contributions but nevertheless sensibly insist on proper accountability.

Reality in the bush – and the need for pragmatism

When wildlife managers who follow pragmatic, workable conservation principles which include the need to kill, are demonized by animal rights activists for the harsh management decisions they are sometimes called on to make, these activists forget that Nature can be far more horrendous in its choices of lethal demise. In all truth those managers are also loathe to take

the hard and distasteful decisions they are often compelled to make for the greater good of the wildlife in their care.



“Africa is not a Disney movie” - Glen Martin

A horrible slow death and an everyday reality of the African bush.

This rhino calf was caught by a snare which was anchored to a tree, and struggled to pull free with such force that the wire cable cut through the skin and tendons to tighten around the bone before the snare twisted and snapped, and broke free of the tree.

The bone growth over the snare shows that this baby rhino took a very long time to die.

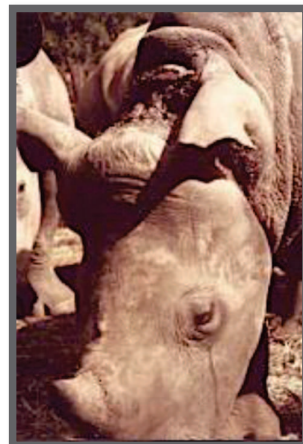
Imagine the pain – deep in the bush – no doctor, no morphine to dull the pain.

What we do not know is how long this baby rhino took to die, or whether, in a weakened and exhausted state, the defenceless victim was eaten alive by jackals or vultures and other scavengers, which start with the soft body parts.

A death, the horror of which you cannot even begin to imagine.



One rhino leg, two snares



Baby rhino almost beheaded by a cable snare, saved just in time by Rangers before it choked

This human-inflicted happening is a common occurrence and brings a slow, agonizing and tragic end to many creatures out there in the bush.

They need help and help costs money.

Some attendees of CoP11 will remember Swaziland's strong stand against the sale of ivory. This earned Swaziland a lot of Brownie points among NGOs and animal rights activists, and a lot of displeasure and disappointment among its peers in the SADC region. At that time Swaziland did not have mature tusked elephants and it still had all of its intact woodland in its parks. We had no personal experience of the overwhelming impact elephants can have on an enclosed habitat with trees hundreds of years old. That position at CoP11 was a serious mistake which raw experience taught us and which consequently resulted in a reversed approach to our elephant management.

Hard decisions have to be made to ensure we leave a legacy of the remnant natural world for our children to conserve and for all of humankind. That is why selective killing of animals is necessary, and why the commercialization of natural resources must be supported.

Here is how it works in Nature:

It is an unpleasant reality that **some animals must die for others to live**. This reality is not confined to predator/prey relationships. In Nature it is true across the entire ecological spectrum.

Natural deaths can be horrendous beyond description when an animal, weakened by drought and parched by thirst, collapses in the blazing sun and is discovered by scavengers which eat it alive, bit by bit, starting with the soft body parts – the eyeballs, the anus, the lips, the tongue – one mouthful or beakful at a time – the luckless animal too weak to effectively resist or defend itself. A more horrible death is unimaginable. A buffalo held down by a pride of lions, still bellowing and kicking 20 minutes after it has been disembowelled and its entrails are being eaten. And the 'gentle, beautiful' cheetah playing sadistically with a baby antelope lamb, letting it run and then knocking it over repeatedly for half an hour before beginning to eat it as its mother looks on helplessly. This is their real world. These are every day natural happenings. Fortunately, management can sometimes soften the harshness of these happenings with interventions of humanity, but it cannot stop the natural process, or reach each and every victim in time to intercept prolonged suffering.

Add the cruelties of snaring by mankind to the mix and you get another of many more heartrending examples of the hundreds of horrendous ways to die a natural death in Nature. In an overcrowded habitat where there is not enough food or water to go around, as also in drought, competition for nourishment can end in mass mortality which is unspeakably unpleasant.

Lethal control by management with a bullet to the brain, causing a sudden unexpected painless death is a far better way to go – and that is one way how, under sound management, impala are harvested for people to eat.

If not removed, surpluses from good conservation practice will intensify competition in overcrowded habitats and **this leads to the horrendous deaths described above**. Domestic stock farmers will say the same thing and it is no different with wild animals. Expanding human populations and diminishing habitats have accentuated the need for the management imperative which has to be financed. All of this is plain common sense.

Common sense also tells us that with bad management comes failure and loss, while wise management produces surpluses, profits and success. And those countries which fail, for whatever reason – whether their failure is politically imposed or not – will lose their wildlife. Surely this does not require those states which are successful in conserving their wildlife resources to share in the failure and downfall of those that aren't? If any country is incapable of protecting its own wildlife resources, no other country can do so for it.

In many habitats the legal hunting and killing of selected animals on a sustainable basis is the most lucrative form of land use and if this saves habitat for the remaining animals to occupy

and multiply in, and prevents natural habitats giving way to competing land use, it is by **any** account, a price worth paying. Let's not be diverted by propaganda from armchair preservationists and activists. Our single-most mission in this case must be the survival of rhinos which need habitats to accommodate them, so let's listen to those custodians who are successful in their wildlife conservation endeavours.

It makes total sense that surpluses generated from good conservation should pay for the costs of conserving habitats and the animals that occupy those habitats for tourists to enjoy and pay for, when government subsidies cannot make ends meet.

So harvesting rhino horn without inflicting pain or killing rhinos should be a much softer option to follow and it is a logical approach to managing natural resources called Nature conservation. After all, from our earliest times as hunter-gatherers, humankind has followed the basic principles of consumptive utilization of natural resources – skewering locusts and field mice on sharpened sticks and roasting them over the fire to eat. To this day, rural and farm children still do this.

Not only is the pragmatic conservation approach logical, it is also practical and successful. Being compliant with the economic imperative, it also embraces self-sustainability by being economically viable.

Our wildlife will not survive if our hearts and minds are at variance with common sense. Our conservation practices have to be pragmatic, practical and ethical, and it is irrelevant that the word “ethical” might mean different things to different people. What is **relevant** and of **primary importance** is that we **SAVE RHINOS FOR POSTERITY.**



A cautious peace in Swaziland - pregnant with the threat of poachers

Swaziland's plea is for all CITES member states to consider and support Swaziland's proposal to legally trade in its own rhino horn as a sensible option to be tested. If legal horn trade does not work for Swaziland's rhinos, Swaziland will be the first to suspend it. If it does work, and we will never know if it will until it is tried, then it could provide a model for other rhino range states to try if they wish to do so.

We believe in miracles. In Swaziland, we had no wildlife to speak of 50 years ago after it had been wiped out during Colonial rule. Today the Kingdom has an extremely rich wildlife offering after restoring 22 species of larger wild animals that had gone locally extinct, and a portfolio of diverse parks to support them. Now another miracle is needed – this time for the rhinos of Africa, by persuading two thirds of the CITES membership that the 39 year old ban on horn trade is not working, and that it be lifted before it is too late to reverse the current trend towards the extinction of rhinos.

Africa's rhinos are an enormous asset which many custodians and conservationists believe has the capacity to not only pay for Nature conservation in rhino range states, but also to contribute meaningfully to poverty alleviation of communities and sustainable development, if only CITES would lift the futile ban.

It will be a travesty, and an indictment on all of us, if rhinos do go extinct without having tried the legal trade option.

Where to next?



Will this cow and calf be seen alive again after they disappear around the bend?



CITES MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, Kingdom of Swaziland
09 September, 2016.