

**IUCN Director-General Julia Marton-Lefèvre's remarks at the launch of the UNTV video
"Rhino Under Threat"**

Odeon cinema, Rio de Janeiro, 18 June 2012

The video we've just seen is a chilling account of the immediate and real threat of extinction facing one of the world's most ancient and charismatic animals.

There is nothing more heartbreaking for us in the conservation community than to see years of efforts to bring the rhino from the brink of extinction being reversed virtually overnight.

IUCN and many of our Members – governments and conservation NGOs -- are working with rhino range states to respond to this alarming situation.

Earlier this month, on June 5th, World Environment Day, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia declared the start of the International Year of the Rhino. He took this step at the request of IUCN and our members and partners in Indonesia.

We applaud this move by Indonesia, the major range state for the two rarest surviving rhino species -- the Javan and Sumatran Rhinos.

We also hope that other range states will follow Indonesia's example and embrace rhino conservation at the top political level and will see success in this as national pride.

The future survival of the rhino in the wild depends on effective conservation action. Success in rhino conservation whether it has been in India, Nepal, Namibia, Kenya or South Africa has been a function of political will and significant field effort to protect rhinos on the ground as well as gathering intelligence.

Faced with the new threat of organized crime, there is no question that we need greater resources for anti-poaching work in protected areas (which is what African rhino programmes focus on) and other rhino habitats.

At the same time, we need greater cooperation across the board – with police, prosecution, customs and so forth, and greater awareness in countries that consume rhino horn. That's why films like the one we are launching today is of great importance, as are the efforts of CITES and its partners in the International Consortium to Combat Wildlife Crime.

Perhaps if senior government and business figures were to come to Africa and Asia and see for themselves the level of effort and commitment to law enforcement, monitoring and conservation on the ground, this might encourage them to want to do the same at home. If given a chance, rhino numbers can grow rapidly. Biological management and translocations, for example, have been crucial to success in Africa. However, IUCN does not support intensively

managed breeding centers for rhinos, which have not been a success in the past. Rhinos are flagship species with large ranges – their conservation in the wild will help other biodiversity. What the film also demonstrates is that good human-wildlife relations are essential and can be achieved by involving communities, employing local staff and generating income from rhino-related tourism.

IUCN is doing its part in helping the rhinos. Through our Species Survival Commission and our SOS (Save Our Species) Initiative, we are supporting a rhino tracking project in the Kunene range (25,000 km²) in Namibia. The project is executed by [Save the Rhino International \(SRI\)](#) and [Save the Rhino Trust Namibia \(SRT\)](#) who train local rhino scouts to carry out constant patrols to deter poaching. The Kunene database is also one of the longest-running and most comprehensive databases on Black Rhino in the world.

To sum up, we can prevent the rhino from going extinct in the wild – we have done this before. But we cannot do it alone, and the time is running out fast.

The next opportunity to tackle these issues head on will be at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Jeju, Korea in September this year. You will be all very welcome in Jeju – and I hope the Year of the Rhino will mark a turning point in the fate of these amazing animals, to secure their long-term survival.