

Update from TRAFFIC East and Southern Africa

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TRAFFIC continues to emphasize significantly its project activities within Africa, to help strengthen control measures and minimize the risk of rhino products entering illegal trade. Work on rhino horn stock management has been elevated to a SADC-level agenda in southern Africa, and the support given to law enforcement in eastern Africa has resulted in numerous seizures of rhino horn over the past year.

Adequate management of horn stockpiles and prevention of illegal trade were identified as priorities by Parties at CITES COP11. Since 2000, TRAFFIC has been undertaking the first systematic effort to identify and track stocks of rhino horn and other rhino products worldwide. Funded by WWF, the Rhino Horn and Product Database (RHPD) currently stores over 1600 records relating to stocks and seizures for both government and private sources in 54 countries. One of the best data sets collected to date is for rhino range states in eastern and southern Africa where over 12,000 kg of rhino horn stock have been documented, of which almost 1000 kg is privately held. RHPD remains the only system for analysing rhino horn stocks and seizures. It is therefore a very appropriate future tool for implementing aspects of Res. Conf. 9.14 (Rev.). Current analyses of stockpile accumulation dynamics and relative stockpile volumes in Africa and Asia will assist future policy decisions.

Under the SADC regional programme for rhino conservation, TRAFFIC has continued to review practices for managing rhino horn stockpiles, including marking, registration and security. In-country visits and reviews have been conducted in Namibia, South Africa (Kruger National Park, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern and North West Provinces) and Zimbabwe. This comes at an essential time, because

African horn stockpiles continue to accumulate at an increasing rate and efficient registration and tracking systems are needed before stocks become too large to manage. In addition to short-term interventions, outcomes will include the promotion of examples of best practice and a framework to comply with CITES directives.

In Kenya, to improve CITES law enforcement, TRAFFIC has undertaken a range of activities, including intelligence-gathering through an informant network, training courses for personnel from various institutions to develop a basis for coordinated enforcement action, and assistance in developing a sniffer-dog unit. A TRAFFIC report, 'Halting illegal rhino horn trade routes in East Africa: an assessment of rhino horn trade routes and Kenya's capacity to halt such trade', was produced. These efforts have yielded impressive seizure results for CITES-listed species, including many rhino horns.

In a more dramatic moment, TRAFFIC recently assisted law enforcement authorities in Djibouti to raid what could well have been the most open and flagrant market of endangered wildlife products in East Africa. A 1999 survey had previously documented a range of illegal CITES-listed products, including over 80 leopard and cheetah skins and hundreds of ostrich eggs from the endangered North African subspecies. After ensuring that there was a firm legal basis and strong government will to shut down the illegal trade in Djibouti's Rue de Brazzaville curio market, TRAFFIC developed a list of target species for seizure. In June 2001, the active participation of 25 police officers in a surprise raid resulted in the seizure of spotted cat skins, African elephant ivory, ostrich eggs and carapaces of marine turtles.