
Chairman's Report

African Rhino Specialist Group

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The African Rhino Specialist Group (ARSG) meeting, held in Zimbabwe late in 1992, identified the most important rhino populations remaining in Africa, and evaluated a number of projects considered critical to the survival of Africa's rhinos (*see Pachyderm* no.16). As such it provided direction and momentum for a number of initiatives planned for 1993.

This year, most disappointingly, has seen a continued sharp decline in the rhino populations in Zimbabwe and intensification of poaching activities in South Africa, which holds so many of Africa's key populations of both black and white rhinoceros. However, on the positive side, there have been a number of encouraging initiatives.

Attention was focused on UNEP's Rhino Range States and Donors meeting held in Nairobi from 28th June to 1st July 1993. As preparation, the ARSG Vice-chairman Dr. Rob Brett attended the preliminary meeting in December 1992, and the Rhino Range States drafted additional project proposals for consideration. The aim of the main meeting was to bring together representatives of the African and Asian Range States, major donors and countries where rhino horn trade continues, in an attempt to secure additional funds for rhino conservation and to reach agreement on which of the numerous projects presented were the most important. The procedure for identifying priority projects, which the ARSG developed at its last meeting, was adopted and appeared to assist the donor agencies and countries in their deliberations. While only limited new funds were announced and current funding levels fall well short of the US \$ 30-40 million requested for Africa's rhinos, we can only urge the donor agencies

and countries to redouble their efforts to secure additional funds, at least so as to meet the requirements of the most critically important projects.

A number of projects were earmarked for special ARSG attention during 1993 and good progress has been achieved. Action plans for the conservation of black rhinoceros populations in Cameroon and Tanzania were successfully developed at workshops organised by the respective States, and presented to the UNEP meeting for international support. Initiatives to secure funding for their implementation are ongoing. Core support for the employment of a Scientific Officer for the ARSG has been secured, and only limited additional funding is now required. The project to analyse supply/demand and black-market trading factors under different trading regimes appears well set, and a workshop on the drafting of a handbook on African rhino survey techniques is being planned.

The development of effective intelligence networks and law enforcement capabilities throughout the Range States remains the single most important consideration in the survival of Africa's rhinos in the short term; and these can only successfully be applied given close co-operation amongst the Range States. International funding is definitely required to secure the situation, but the full commitment of Africa's governments is also an essential ingredient for success. I would therefore appeal to all donors and potential donors to consider most seriously the option of underwriting the security of one or more of the key populations towards and beyond the year 2000, and to contribute to any relevant multi-national programmes aimed at eliminating illegal trading activities.