



# Trans-boundary wildlife crime training

## KAZA court officials in workshop

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Countries that make up the Kavango-Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA) need to provide for specialist prosecutors that have knowledge about all wildlife crime-related legislation and the appropriate prosecution of offenders.

This was the view of deputy environment minister Bernadette Jagger at the KAZA-TFCA Regional Judiciary and Prosecutors Workshop that is taking place in Windhoek.

KAZA-TFCA member states include Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The purpose of the workshop is to increase the awareness around the seriousness of transnational wildlife crime and to unlock higher level support within the prosecutorial and judicial sector of each country.

Jagger said prosecutors and magistrates need to be well versed in the relevant legislation and understand the effect of wildlife crime on the economy of countries.

According to her, clear procedures for arrest and charging of suspects, including the responsibilities of different agencies, must be established with systems in place for monitoring wildlife crime cases.

“Given the global nature of the poaching epidemic and intricate involvement of the international criminal syndicates in wildlife crime, this workshop is an important event and process to rally a concerted effort to tackle the threat of illegal wildlife trade and poaching of wildlife.”

Jagger said poaching negatively impacts populations of endangered species and it is also damaging the wildlife-based tourism sector which generates rural employment, foreign exchange, and increasingly contributes to the GDP.

“Namibia therefore also considers wildlife crime as an economic crime.”

She said criminals involved in wildlife crime are enticing poor, rural people into a life of crime which has significant social impacts on their immediate and extended family members when they are imprisoned.

She said countering wildlife crime represents significant costs to countries with time, energy and finances being diverted away from other more positive conservation and socio-economic development interventions.

According to Jagger wildlife crime can lead to collateral damage from well-intended, but misdirected efforts to counter wildlife trafficking such as the closing down of legal markets, alienation of communities and philosophical conflicts with neighbours and the international community.

“It is our responsibility as KAZA-TFCA to ensure that this trans-frontier conservation area is developed as a sustainable conservation and tourism development programme from which our partner countries can derive equitable social and economic benefits, while observing the principles of accountability, equitability, transparency and mutual respect.”



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HARMONISE: Court officials from the five KAZA countries are attending a workshop in a bid to strengthen the fight against wildlife crime.

PHOTO: ELLANIE SMIT

Jagger said the KAZA-TFCA continues to foster transnational collaboration and cooperation among partner countries in implementing ecosystems and cultural resource management.

According to her, ecosystem integrity and natural ecological processes will be enhanced by harmonising the management approaches for natural resources and tourism development across international boundaries.

Jagger said the five partner countries therefore believe they can derive equitable returns and significant socio-economic benefits provided they harmonise their conservation policies and practises and use their shared natural resources prudently.

She stressed that wildlife crime enforcement need to be harmonised with other legislation and international wildlife trafficking enforcement mechanisms should be domesticated.

“Effective operationalisation and implementation of relevant laws and regulations are crucial and appropriate penalties, prosecution and sentencing must be in place. We need to analyse and assess our laws and regulations and enforce them to deter illegal hunting of wildlife and the illegal trade in wildlife and wildlife products.”

She added that the support and strengthening of prosecutors and magistrates in the handling of wildlife cases is very important.

“We must ensure that key enforcement agencies and prosecuting authorities collaborate effectively and efficiently.”