

Declare war against poachers – //Hoebeb

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OPUWO – The Governor of Kunene, Joshua //Hoebeb, has urged Namibians to declare war on rhino poachers.

Speaking at a meeting held at Sesfontein on Friday to strategise on ways to prevent rhino poaching in Namibia, //Hoebeb also called for game guards to be properly armed to enable them to protect wildlife.

“If this is a war then it warrants us bringing in members of the Namibia Defence Force. It is being done in Botswana and it is working. There, members of the defence force are protecting wildlife, why not in Namibia?” he said.

//Hoebeb further stated that rhinos are prime natural resources not only for Namibia, but for the whole world and they need to be protected at all costs.

The meeting was organised by the office of the governor a week after a rhino cow and its calf were killed by poachers in Kunene.

Three Chinese nationals were also arrested with 14 rhino horns at the Hosea Kutako International Airport in March this year. DNA tests conducted in South Africa confirmed that the rhino horns were all of Namibian origin. Of the 14 rhino

horns, six were from black rhinos and were suspected to have come from Kunene or south of the Etosha National Park.

The deputy director of wildlife and parks, Johnson Ndokosho, said during the meeting that Namibia has black and white rhinos, and two-thirds of the population is made up of black rhinos.

Of the approximately 4 500 black rhinos left in the world, 80% are found in Namibia and South Africa, and the remaining 20% in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.

Ndokosho told the meeting between 2011 and May 2014, Namibia lost 13 rhinos to poaching – three of them in the Kunene region.

The meeting resolved that more resources be allocated to all institutions involved in protecting wildlife, and more specifically those involved in the protection of rhinos such as conservancies, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, Round River Conservation Studies and others.

Round River is a non-profit organisation which focuses on international wildlife conservation research and education.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, members of the Save the Rhino Trust, chairpersons of different conservancies in Kunene, the regional councillors of the Khorixas and Sesfontein constituencies, police deputy commander of Kunene, James Nderura, and a number of traditional leaders. – Nampa