



## Interpol joins Namibia's anti-poaching war

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International policing agency Interpol has joined hands with Namibia in its fight against escalating rhino and elephant poaching, including through teaching advanced crime scene investigation, probing transnational linkages and uncovering who the kingpins of the wild crime syndicates are. In what is a first for Namibia the Interpol Sub-directorate on Environment Crime has stepped in to train Namibian police officers, particularly members of the Protective Resources Unit, and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. About 20 participants gathered at the Waterberg Plateau Park this week for the seven-day training course on wildlife crime. In an interview with Namibian Sun, Christian Dietrich, Criminal Intelligence Officer from the Interpol Sub-directorate on Environment Crime, said although the level of poaching in Namibia is not



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as high as in other countries it is the opportune time to start doing something about it. Just last week another rhino carcass was discovered in the Palmwag area of the Kunene Region. The rhino's horns had been removed. This brought to 14 the number of rhino carcasses found in Namibia this year, while 33 elephants have also been poached. Dietrich said although he could not elaborate on specifics with regard to the Namibian poaching situation, in general the poaching crisis is fuelled by demand and the high price that syndicates are willing to pay for these products. Salvatore Amato from the Environment Crime Programme at Interpol told Namibian Sun that poaching is a transnational organised problem and it should therefore be approached as such. "We want to help by facilitating across all borders, providing additional skills to these officials and putting together a formalised and organised response to this problem. We are trying to dismantle this chain." The aim is to enhance the capacity of these officials to combat wildlife crimes, particularly in the trafficking of rhino horn, said Dietrich. According to Dietrich the need for this training was identified during the workshop on law enforcement and wildlife crime prevention held in Windhoek earlier this year and it is funded by the United States. The conference was organised by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and other stakeholders. It identified several issues such as how Namibia needs to address wildlife trafficking, advanced training of officials, crime scene investigation, investigating of transnational links and how to further figure out who the kingpins of the syndicates are. "There is a need to look further down the poaching supply chain," said Dietrich. The training course therefore focuses on the review of specific techniques such as interviewing skills, taking witness statements of suspects and even note taking. It also focuses on crime scene investigation. A mock crime scene will be set up to help the participants understand what is important for them to do at a crime scene and how not to disturb the scene. Evidence is often inadmissible in court because of poor handling of a crime scene. The participants are also taught operational planning, search preparation, the obtaining of a search warrant and planning and execution of a search. Also important is court procedure and how to give testimony in court. Both Dietrich and Amato praised the course attendees for their eagerness and willingness to learn. "There is a desire from them to gather more information," they said. WATERBERG ELLANIE SMIT