



## Donâ€™t collaborate with poachers - Herunga

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The Minister of Environment and Tourism, Uahekua Herunga, has warned Namibians who are collaborating with international poaching syndicates that they must stop with this illegal practice or face the consequences.

Namibia is in the process of establishing an anti-poaching unit and Herunga stressed the urgency of getting this unit up and running as soon as possible. He said the country experienced a spill-over of poaching from South Africa, where large numbers of rhinos and elephants have been killed in the past two years. Official numbers for this year indicate that 22 rhinos have been killed in Namibia, mostly black rhinos in the Kunene Region. Also, 76 elephants have been poached this year. These were 19 elephants in the Kavango East Region while the rest were killed in the Zambezi Region. Herunga said the demand for ivory and rhino horn is not coming from Namibia, but from elsewhere. â€œI am not afraid to say that it is coming from Asia,â€ he said.

But he also pointed out that a person who lands at an airport in Namibia would not have the necessary information on where and how to find rhinos and elephants. â€œThat means that Namibians are collaborating with the enemies.â€ They must be warned because they are getting peanuts for this and our men and women in uniform will be on the ground where the poaching occurs. They are destroying their own economy. They must stop.â€ Herunga said tourism is the third highest contributor to the GDP because of conservation and pointed out that in 1991/92 Namibia received about 220 000 tourists. Last year 1.3 million foreign visitors arrived in the country. â€œDo you expect people from America to come here and look at our trees and our faces? No, they want to see different wildlife species. But it is our own people that collaborate with syndicates to slaughter wildlife,â€ the minister said. Speaking about the anti-poaching unit Herunga said it would consist of approximately 400 members. The Public Service Commission still has to approve the establishment of the unit. He stressed that he had pleaded with the Commission to treat the matter as urgent, and would also approach the Prime Minister next year to speed up the establishment of the unit. He said although the unit would be established within the ministry the majority of the employees would be recruited from the public. Herunga said training would be provided by the Namibian Defence Force and the security services to everybody involved combating the poaching syndicates in the country. He said the ministry is closely co-operating with the Ministry of Defence and the police to monitor poaching hotspots. WINDHOEK ELLANIE SMIT



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