

Ministry dedicated to protecting rhinos, elephants

News - Environment | 2017-03-02

Page no: 1



TOMORROW is the United Nations world wildlife day and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism has dedicated it to the protection of rhinos and elephants whose survival is threatened by poachers.

The ministry said in a statement on Tuesday the day is also dedicated to the proper management of human-wildlife conflict, one of the major problems the ministry is facing, as well as national parks and how these national assets can be managed to the benefit of all Namibians.

According to the statement, the ministry has organised a workshop for tomorrow to raise awareness about the poaching scourge; the need to intensify anti-poaching operations; and the need to raise funds for human-wildlife conflict management and protected area management.

President Hage Geingob is expected to deliver a keynote address at the event, which will be held under the theme "Raising funds for wildlife protection and law enforcement, human-wildlife management and protected area management".

The ministry said the increasing number of wildlife crimes have reached a new level and most have turned violent.

"Well-organised gangs enter vulnerable areas and crime syndicates organise the trafficking of rhino horns and elephant tusks through complex networks to foreign markets," it said in the statement.

If the syndicate-based wildlife crime is not controlled, it will trigger a vicious cycle, which will deepen poverty in rural areas, it said.

Poaching could also negatively impact on the lifeblood of national parks like the Etosha National Park and result in a decrease in tourist numbers.

The ministry further said it recognises that living with wildlife often carries a cost, with increased wildlife populations and expanded ranges into communal and freehold farming areas, which lead to more regular conflict between people and wild animals, mainly elephants and predators.

"This has resulted in livestock and crop losses, damage to water installations and, in some instances, loss of human lives."

The statement said there is an urgent need to reduce the impacts of human-wildlife conflict on vulnerable people, and this requires funding.

The ministry said specific challenges like repairing fences, lack of water facilities for wild animals and inadequate staff housing in national parks among others, need to be addressed.

The UN world wildlife day is aimed at celebrating and raising awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora. The UN is this year celebrating the day under the theme 'Listen to the young voices'.

- Nampa
