



Lifelong ban for poaching convicts

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Foreigners who are found guilty of wildlife crimes will not be allowed back in Namibia after completing their jail terms.

This is but one of the amendments contained in the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Amendment Bill that was tabled in the National Assembly by the minister of environment and tourism, Pohamba Shifeta, last week.

This will apply to foreigners who are found guilty of possession of, and dealing in, elephant and rhino products.

Shifeta said a court order would be issued and the person would be declared persona non grata after serving his or her sentence or after paying a fine. In most cases, foreign nationals were involved in crimes related to possession and dealing in elephant and rhino products.

The bill further proposes that the fine for illegal possession of controlled wildlife products should be increased from N\$20 000 to N\$15 million and the imprisonment period increased from five years to 15 years.

It also proposes that the fine for illegal dealing or trading in controlled wildlife products be increased from N\$200 000 to N\$25 million and the imprisonment period be increased from 20 years to 25 years, while the fine for non-compliance with regulations be increased from N\$8 000 to N\$100 000 and the imprisonment period from two to 10 years.

Additionally, an amendment is proposed to strengthen the seizure and forfeiture provision of the principal Act by adding reference to the Prevention of Organised Crime Act of 2004.

Shifeta said the current penalties for wildlife trade and possession crimes were not a deterrent, especially taking into account that trade and possession often involved foreign kingpins who were able to easily pay their way out where there was an option of a fine.

"Organised crime syndicates involved in trafficking of rhino horns and elephant tusks are using very complex networks leading to foreign markets."

In 2016, a total of 135 elephant tusks and pieces as well as 36 rhino horns were seized.

So far this year, 21 elephant tusks and four rhino horns have been seized.

Shifeta also said this year, Namibia has been implicated in two seizures of rhino horns, in South Africa and Hong Kong.

According to him, the current levels of illegal trade and wildlife trafficking are fuelling corruption, threatening peace and stability, strengthening illicit trade routes and destabilising economies.

Shifeta told Namibian Sun that the next step Namibia will take is to deter poaching in Namibia by strengthening security on commercial farms where rhinos are being kept since poachers have started to shift their focus from national parks to farms and conservancies.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/asseban-for-poaching-convicts2017-04-040.jpg>)

ACTION: Stiffer sentences have been proposed for wildlife crimes. Photo: NWR

He also referred to the newly opened law enforcement training centre at Waterberg and said the first training of 50 members will start this month. This will be a mixture of both old staff members and new recruits. He added that recruitment for the nearly 500-strong national anti-poaching unit has started, but added that the head of the unit has not been appointed yet.

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