



## Namibia calls for review on wildlife trade ban

15 October 2018 | Environment

Namibia's environment minister Pohamba Shifeta has urged for a review on the blanket ban on the trade of wildlife products, including rhino horns and ivory, in order to better curb the poaching epidemic threatening the survival of high-value species.

Speaking at the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in London last week, Shifeta told delegates Namibia believes that "banning any trade in products will not necessarily achieve the outcome of stopping the demand and illegal trade. This has not been successful with alcohol, drugs and indeed, rhino horn, pangolin scales and ivory."

Shifeta said important decisions should be based on "science and we call for objective scientific review of the current theory that supports blanket bans on wildlife products."

Shifeta drew on statistics that have shown that despite an international ban implemented in 1975 through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of Wild Fauna and Flora on rhino horns, the population has declined "relentlessly and catastrophically" through poaching and a thriving illegal market.

He said Namibia is strongly opposed to the "current trend in international thinking which has drifted from eliminating illegal supply into closing all supply in an attempt to eliminate the demand for some wildlife products."

### Costs of protection

At the conference, Shifeta highlighted the steep costs of protecting wildlife against the surge of poachers.

He said as poaching incidences of high-value wild animals intensified, so the costs to protect and keep these animals safe rise.

As an example, he said the cost of protecting a rhino is around N\$1 000 per day, which translates to N\$30 000 per rhino per month.

In Namibia, which has a population of more than 3 500 rhinos, approximately N\$105 million is needed per month to protect the entire country's rhino population, including those in private ownership.

### Measures

Shifeta highlighted a number of steps Namibia has taken in recent years to address the poaching epidemic, including a steep increase in penalties if anyone is found guilty of wildlife crimes.

Fines related to poaching of elephant and rhino, were increased from a maximum N\$ 200 000 to N\$25 million, and imprisonment from a period of 20 years to 25 years.

Anti-poaching units have been created and training intensified for prosecutors, investigators and magistrates.



(<https://d3rp5jatom3eyn.cloudfront.net/assets/calls-for-review-on-wildlife-trade-ban2018-10-150.jpg>)

TRADE QUESTIONS: Confiscated rhino horns and elephant tusks on display in Windhoek. PHOTO: NAMPA

He said while the CITES ban has done little to curb poaching of rhinos and elephants, in contrast, the Nile crocodile has fared much better within the scope of organised trade.

JANA-MARI SMITH