



Calls for legal horn trade

Will end rhino slaughter

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Calls to legalise rhino horn trade in Namibia are growing louder in an effort to save the species from annihilation, particularly after China partly lifted its already weakly implemented 25-year ban on the use of rhino horn and tiger bones in traditional medicines.

In a letter to members and affiliates last week, Namibia Chamber of Environment (NCE) CEO Chris Brown warned that the demand for animal products such as rhino horn, ivory, pangolin scales, tiger and lion bones will continue to grow, despite zero scientific evidence of their medical benefit.

“We can grow the supply. And we can do it in a way that protects and conserves our rhinos while harnessing the economic opportunities and realising a suite of other conservation and socio-economic benefits,” he wrote.

Brown said it's time for Namibia “to take some bold steps regarding rhino management for the purpose of long-term rhino conservation.”

He said the NCE believes that Namibia should engage in the international trade in rhino horn ideally with the approval of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or alternatively, if blocked, despite CITES.

Windfall for all

Brown argued that legalising the trade, with strict monitoring and transparency mechanisms in place, would not only significantly reduce the incentive to poach – as the risk-to-reward ratio would be heavily skewed towards high risk and low reward, and the markets would simultaneously be well supplied with legal horn - but could “contribute close to N\$2 billion per year to the Namibian economy and this would grow as rhino populations expanded.”

Furthermore, tax revenue to the state would be significant and a legal trade in rhino horn could enable land reform, create jobs, address rural poverty, help the country adapt to and mitigate climate change and mitigate many other challenges, Brown stated.

“In short, there is no other natural renewable resource that comes close to the value of rhino horn that would prosper in the semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions of Namibia and Africa.”

This follows mere weeks after environment minister Pohamba Shifeta again urged the international community to review 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.

Shifeta told delegates at the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in London in mid-October that he believes “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.”

Brown further noted that in order to ensure transparent monitoring and auditing of the rhino horn trade, a national



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SLAUGHTER: Rhinos are always under threat of being butchered by poachers for their valuable horn. PHOTO: NAMPA

dehorning of all rhinos would need to take place in national parks and on communal and freehold land on a two to three year cycle.

“Each removed horn, as well as all stock-piled horns, would be micro-chipped, a DNA sample taken and a passport issued.”

Brown said as part of the legalised trade, the NCE proposes that horns should be “strategically released for sale to pre-approved buyers under a de Beers type marketing system.”

The passport issued to the horn will accompany it at all times and a small royalty would be taken on each sale to cover the cost of dehorning, DNA analysis, storage, management and sales.

“The bulk of the horn value would revert to the owner or custodian of the rhinos from whence the horn came, such as the national parks, communal conservancies, private owners and the environment ministry.”

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