



Poachers will 'kill every single rhino'

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If rhino owners are not allowed to harvest and legally sell horns, poachers will kill every last rhino in Namibia.

This is according to environment minister Pohamba Shifeta, who was speaking last week at a meeting where the poaching situation in the country was discussed.

Shifeta said the price of a rhino horn has skyrocketed and is currently about N\$900 000 per kilogram. "It is going up every day."

He said if rhino range countries could sell rhino horns, the price will go down because the demand would still be there. According to Shifeta, poachers and consumers are looking for ivory and rhino horns for their medicinal value.

"The demand is there, whether we close the legal market or not."

Shifeta said at the moment it is too costly for private farmers to keep rhino. "Should owners be allowed to harvest and sell horns it would be economically viable for them. The criminal is looking for the horn, if there is no horn, he will not risk his life to shoot the rhino. If we do not do this, many more rhino will be killed. They will come for the last rhino until it is dead."

Shifeta also referred to the criminal justice system in Namibia, and said there needs to be coordination between law-enforcement in the field and the courtroom when handling wildlife crime cases.

"They need to gather all the necessary evidence, so that the prosecution can nail the suspect, if the investigation is not properly done, prosecutors cannot prove their case in court."

Shifeta pointed out that both prosecutors and police officers are burdened with hundreds of cases and this must be looked into.

"It is haphazard. We must see how we can dispose of these cases in a timely fashion and see that things are done properly on the ground and that the constitution is applied properly."

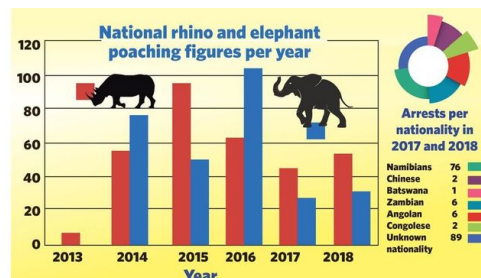
Shifeta said although poachers are arrested they are not the end-consumers and they will never give up the kingpin.

"As poaching syndicates increase in size, number and sophistication, it is more important than ever that law-enforcement responses are robust, reliable and effective."

Shifeta said wildlife trafficking is slowly becoming a million-dollar criminal enterprise that has expanded to more than just a conservation concern. He said the increasing involvement of organised crime in poaching and wildlife trafficking promotes corruption, threatens peace, strengthens illicit trade routes and destabilises economies and communities that depend on wildlife or their livelihoods.

"We therefore need to urgently address this issue of illegal hunting of our elephant and rhino and illegal timber harvesting now."

He said to combat wildlife crime effectively, it is vital that the law-enforcement community deploys all available tools to ensure that the entire crime chain is addressed.



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"More effort is required and new approaches needed, including the increased use of science and technology."

According to him, wildlife crime is similar to other forms of criminality, and the full range of forensic science, expertise and support can potentially be brought to bear from one end of the illicit trade chain to the other.

He further condemned the ill-intentioned activities of wildlife crimes and called upon those involved to refrain from such activities with immediate effect.

ELLANIE SMIT