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Informanté

Catch the poachers, Shifeta orders

Staff Reporter

AMIDST shocking discoveries of wildlife poaching incidents in the country recently, such as the 11 black rhinos killed in Etosha recently, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Pohamba Shifeta on Wednesday launched the first ever National Stakeholder Forum on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement to strengthen the fight against the crimes.

Shifeta said Namibia has experienced a massive surge in wildlife crime over the past decade, driven by increased global demand for illegal wildlife products.

“As a global phenomenon, wildlife trafficking has become a multi-billion-dollar criminal enterprise that has expanded to much more than just a conservation concern. Environmental crime has exploded to become the fourth-largest criminal sector worldwide, after drug trafficking, counterfeit crimes and human trafficking,” the minister said.



Minister Pohamba Shifeta. Photo: MEFT

In 2021, the environment ministry launched its five-year Revised National Strategy on Wildlife Protection and Law Enforcement. The strategy represents a framework and policy directives for national approaches to protecting wildlife in Namibia.

It further builds on the effective enforcement of laws governing wildlife resources in our country. One of the action points in the strategy was to establish a National Stakeholder Forum to facilitate broader stakeholder consultation, the minister said.

“We are here today at the first National Stakeholder Forum Meeting to take stock of our achievements to date, revisit the action plan and identify the gaps and pending issues to find solutions to fill the gaps,” Shifeta said.

Shifeta also shared that the ministry has revised legislation to strengthen wildlife protection and increased maximum penalties for wildlife crimes to ensure that perpetrators are convicted and appropriately punished, deterring further crime.

He said the recent discovery of 11 rhino carcasses in Etosha and the illegal timber operations on small-scale farms in Kavango East is an indication that Namibia needs to up its anti-poaching operations.

“We need to reorganize our combined forces and change our operation strategies as a matter of urgency. Concerning this latest poaching incident in Etosha National Park, I respectfully and unequivocally give you the marching order, as a combined team, to ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to book by all means.”

