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WINDHOEK, Aug. 5 — Rhino poachers in Namibia have shifted focus from national parks to custodianship and private farms with both black and white rhinos being the target, an official said

Thursday.

Namibia's Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Tourism (MEFT) has recorded 33 rhinos poached since the start of the year, of which 24 were black rhinos and nine were white rhinos, said MEFT spokesperson Romeo Muyunda in a statement.

This year's poaching cases include nine black rhinos poached on custodianship farms, 15 black in the Etosha National Park, and another nine white rhinos on private farms, he said, stressing that poaching in national parks has slightly decreased due to strengthened wildlife protection strategies.

Namibia recorded 44 rhinos poached in 2021, 42 in 2020, 57 in 2019, 83 in 2018, and 55 in 2017.

According to Muyunda, the rhino poaching situation in the country is dynamic and the fight is far from over.

"We remain committed to ensuring that poaching of rhinos is significantly reduced if not completely stopped. This, however, requires the involvement of all stakeholders including members of the public by rejecting poaching in our societies," he said.

Muyunda said to strengthen rhino security and prevent further poaching, the ministry with its stakeholders is implementing strategies used in the country's national parks on custodianship farms and private farms.

"This includes increased ground patrols, aerial patrols establishment or strengthening of existing anti-poaching units, the inclusion of MEFT and law enforcement agencies in intelligence gathering and law enforcement activities," he said.

Muyunda also said the ministry is, however, happy that elephant poaching remains relatively low with only two elephants poached this year.

"Our target moving forward is to reduce elephant poaching to zero. While rhino poaching has been dynamic, elephant poaching on the other (hand) has been steadily declining over the last five years from 50 elephants poached in 2017, 27 in 2018, 13 in 2019, 12 in 2020, and eight in 2021," he said. (Xinhua)