

## 87 rhinos poached last year

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**ETOSHA National Park has become a poaching hotspot, as rhino poaching remains a serious concern in the country, the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism has said in an update on poaching.**

According to a statement released by the ministry's spokesperson, Romeo Muyunda yesterday, 87 rhinos were poached last year, 61 of them black rhinos and 26 white rhinos.

"The 2022 poaching cases include 15 rhinos poached on rhino custodianship farms, another 25 on white rhino private farms and 46 in Etosha National Park.

"In previous years, Namibia has recorded 45 rhinos poached in 2021, 43 in 2020, 61 in 2019, 84 in 2018 and 55 in 2017. This year, one rhino has been poached," he added.

However, Muyunda said there were no elephants poached this year.

He said elephant poaching figures have declined steeply over the past years, from the highest figure of 101 in 2015, 50 in 2017, 27 in 2018, 13 in 2019, 12 in 2020, 10 in 2021, to four last year.

He said the four elephants poached last year comprised two in Zambezi region and one each in Kavango West and Kunene regions.

"It is our hope that these figures will continue to drop until we reach the zero-poaching target. For this year, no elephant has been poached," Muyunda added.

He added that the ministry has noted with serious concern that Etosha National Park is a poaching hotspot.

"The ministry and its partners in wildlife protection and law enforcement will step up efforts against wildlife crime in Etosha National Park, particularly to curb rhino poaching," Muyunda said.

He added that immediate improved interventions have been put in place across the country, under the leadership of the ministry of environment, to fight wildlife crime. Muyunda said wildlife crime threatens not only the survival of the species, but also the reputation of the country's conservation, socio-economic and tourism development.

"Namibia's growing tourism sector is hugely dependent on wildlife. The rhino poaching situation requires the involvement of all stakeholders. Members of the public should report suspected perpetrators to the authorities," he said.

Muyunda said, "The perpetrators of these crimes are within our society, therefore, we should report suspicious activities to the authorities."

He urged the nation to stand against the illegal plundering of the natural resources by rejecting and condemning wildlife crimes in the country.

"We appreciate the work that our anti-poaching units across the country, comprising the ministry of environment, the Namibian Police, Namibia Defence Force, game farms and conservancies are doing.

"We salute the work of the prosecutor general's office, the Namibia Central Intelligence and Blue Rhino Task Force, non-governmental organisations, farmers, the private sector, development partners and members of the public for their cooperation and collaboration in this fight," he said.