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The Ministry of Environment, Tourism and Forestry has reiterated its position on the illegal killing of rhinos, saying poachers will face the full wrath of the law.

The Ministry's Spokesperson, Romeo Muyunda, said all black rhinos in Namibia are state-owned while white rhinos are not part of the custodianship program because they can be privately owned.

Various public members aired their frustrations on a National radio, complaining about the strict regulations surrounding the ownership of rhinos and the hunting of rhinos for commercial purposes.

"Why can't Namibians buy rhinos for meat and production purposes"?, a caller questioned.

Muyunda reiterated that poaching continues to be a big concern.

"There are conservation policies in the Ministry that deal with those illegal actions of poaching. Rhinos are protected by the Controlled Wildlife Products and Trade Act Nine (9) of 2008, which still contains penalties widely viewed as being woefully inadequate in light of the value of the illegal trade in animal products such as elephant tusks, rhino horn and pangolin scales," Muyunda stressed.

Although rhinos belong to the state, Muyunda said Namibians are allowed to buy white rhinos as custodians, but they have to acquire a permit from the Ministry before buying them.

However, he stressed there are a number of requirements the Ministry looks at for one to buy white rhinos, such as sufficient space, facilities, security and protection of rhinos.

Custodians should monitor and oversee their populations, provide food and water and keep the rhinos safe to the best of their ability, he said.

“There are people that own white rhinos as custodians, but the Ministry encourages the sustainability of conservation policies,” Muyunda emphasized.

He said, “If you buy a white rhino, you have the right to own it, but you cannot kill a rhino like a cattle because they are hunted and killed for their horns”. They need to be in existence for them to produce young ones and be available for future generations, he added.

In 2022, 87 rhinos were poached for their horns in Namibia. In 2021, 45 were killed. In total, 46 of the rhinos were poached in the Etosha National Park.

Meanwhile, Oshana police commissioner Naftal Sakaria, who was recently appointed as Head of the Anti-Poaching Unit in Etosha National Park said that armed poachers found in the Etosha National Park should surrender to the police or they will be shot.

Sakaria will serve in the position for six months.

While in this position, he will also remain the Oshana regional commander.

Sakaria is tasked with commanding the police and military forces deployed in the flagship park to protect animals, especially iconic animals such elephants and rhinos, from being poached.

Namibia has become a stronghold for rhinos in Africa, with the second-largest rhino population on the continent at an estimated 3,390. This includes the largest population of black rhinos and the second-largest population of white rhinos in all of Africa.

Rhino horns are touted as a cure for hangovers, cancer, and impotence in Asian countries.