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A live animal and two pangolin shells were seized in the Kavango West region on Tuesday and last Sunday. Photo: Nampol

- **ENVIRONMENT**

ILLEGAL TRADE SHOULD BE STOPPED

Biden comments on pangolin smuggling – China continues to be a problem

With regard to the illegal wildlife trade in pangolins, American President Joe Biden declared war on it last week in front of the United States Congress.

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Windhoek

On Tuesday, a 29-year-old was arrested in Nkurenkuru in the Kavango West Region after he was found with two pangolin shells worth N\$100,000 in his possession. According to Namibian police, the suspect did not have a permit to trade such products and the tanks were confiscated.

Also last Sunday, two male suspects aged 36 and 44 were arrested in Kakoro (also Kavango-West Region) after they were found in possession of a live pangolin worth N\$50,000 during a police operation.

In a speech by the President to the US Congress, Joe Biden explained that pangolins are caught and traded annually to a greater extent than rhinos, elephants and tigers combined. “Consumer demand for pangolins for traditional medicinal uses has led to all eight pangolin species, native to Africa and Asia, being threatened with extinction,” Biden said.

Accordingly, with effect from January 2, 2017, all pangolin species were included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which prohibits international trade for primarily commercial purposes.

China remains the largest destination for pangolins

“China has taken some steps to curb the trade in pangolins at its international ports and has listed pangolins in its wildlife protection law. “Yet China maintains a system that allows the legal commercial trade of medicinal pangolin scales from national stockpiles, thereby indirectly providing opportunities for the sale of illegal pangolins in the domestic pangolin market,” Biden said. Provincial governments in China may grant permits to certain pharmaceutical companies and other entities to purchase pangolin specimens from national stocks for medical purposes, he said.

“According to the United Nations, pangolin seizures have increased tenfold since 2014; “In addition, based on data collected between 2007 and 2018, 71 percent of seizures were destined for China,” Biden said. The scope of individual seizures has also increased. In 2019, Malaysian authorities reported the seizure of a record-breaking 30 tons of pangolin products. “My administration therefore remains concerned that, despite assurances from China regarding their anti-trafficking efforts, demand for pangolin scales appears to be increasing.” Biden says China needs to do more to close domestic pangolin markets . “Without these measures, it is likely that the pangolin population will continue to decline, moving the species closer to extinction.”

Since the Secretary of the Interior's August 24, 2023 certification, Biden said executive departments have formulated conditions for conservation and combating illegal trade that must be met by China to allay United States concerns that China is undermining pangolin conservation under CITES. “The necessary measures that China would take to demonstrate its commitment to pangolin conservation and CITES compliance include complete closure of the domestic market for pangolins and pangolin parts, transparent accounting of domestic stocks and full "Deletion of

pangolin parts from the national list of approved medicines." China had made some progress in meeting its international obligations, but given the complexity of the Chinese pangolin market and overlapping jurisdictions, more time was needed to ensure that the relevant authorities take necessary steps to save pangolin species from extinction.

"If China does not make significant commitments to implement CITES-mandated measures to protect pangolin species by December 31, 2023, I plan to order certain import bans and trade measures on certain products from China," Biden said.

The American president ended his speech by making it clear that the United States will take the necessary steps to end the illegal trade and save pangolins from extinction.