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## Namibia warns of wildlife crisis due to deforestation, poaching

Xinhua, March 3, 2024

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WINDHOEK, Mar. 2 (Xinhua) -- Namibia's Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism said Saturday that rapid deforestation and industrial emissions in the country are causing habitat loss for rare and endangered wildlife, exacerbating climate change impacts such as droughts and floods, and hindering efforts to sustainably manage natural resources for future generations.

In a statement commemorating World Wildlife Day, Romeo Muyunda, the ministry's spokesperson, underscored the critical need to address the challenges facing Namibia's wildlife.

"The need to grow our economies is resulting in forests and woodlands disappearing at a rapid rate to make way for development projects. These forests and woodlands are home to wildlife species, some of which are rare and endangered. We are also experiencing an increase in industrial activities emitting greenhouse gases that further contribute to the destruction of the ozone layer, leading to climate change," he said.

Muyunda said another significant challenge to Namibia's wildlife is poaching, particularly of high-value species such as rhinos, elephants and pangolins.

"Recently, we have also noted a growing trend in plant poaching in the country. Unprecedented levels of poaching are robbing us of much-valued resources," he said.

"Our high-value species are globally categorized as critically endangered, and at the rate at which poaching is taking place, we run the risk of having these magnificent wildlife species extinct," he added.

According to Muyunda, the recent poaching statistics are concerning, with the country recording 67 rhinos and eight elephant poaching cases last year, while eight rhinos have been illegally killed so far this year.

Over the last 10 years, Namibia recorded 631 poaching cases, with the highest numbers recorded in 2022.

Muyunda said poaching in Namibia continues despite efforts to stop it, mainly because of poverty, as people are tempted by small payments, even though there's no local demand for ivory, horns and pangolin scales.

He said that despite the concerning figures, law enforcement efforts against poaching have been effective, with 139 suspects arrested in 2023 for rhino and elephant-related crimes, alongside seizures of firearms and vehicles.

"Namibians are called upon to unite and act against wildlife crimes to ensure our wildlife resources are utilized to benefit us all and generations to come," he said. Enditem

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