

Rhino exports: Namibia considered a transit route

Twelve white rhinos of South African origin were exported from Namibia to America in 2022.

This is according to the trade database of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites).

South African white rhinos were also exported to America via Namibia last year, but the exact numbers remain unknown, as statistics from Cites' trade database from 2023 have not yet been uploaded.

Several more applications have reportedly been made in Namibia to export white rhinos to the USA and other overseas countries this year.

Concerns

According to Cites, Namibia is the only country in Africa that exports white rhinos for breeding purposes, with concerns raised that the country is considered a transit route to overseas countries outside their natural habitat and distribution range.

South African environment minister Barbara Creecy announced at the end of March that Cabinet had approved revised policies to phase out the intensive management and breeding of captive rhinos for commercial purposes and promote wild populations.

In a media release issued at the end of 2023, the Namibian environment ministry expressed their concern about Namibian-registered game traders importing live white rhinos from South Africa to Namibia in order to export the animals to countries outside their natural habitat for breeding purposes.

"Personally, I am against the export of white rhinos to any countries outside Africa. The species belongs in Africa," president of the Namibian Professional Hunters Association (Napha), Axel Cramer, told Namibia Media Holdings (NMH).

"Wild is wild and must remain wild," he emphasised.

Harmful

Ministry spokesperson Romeo Muyunda warned in November that South Africa has stricter measures in place, which include a ban on exports of certain wildlife species.

"Namibian private farmers and especially registered game traders are warned not to enter into such transactions because they will not be supported within the provisions of the Cites Convention," he said.

"In the long run, this will be detrimental to our conservation as it could lead to international trade suspensions for Namibia due to non-compliance with the provisions of the Cites Convention," the ministry noted.

"The import of white rhinos from South Africa can also harm our farmers or game traders if they want to export white rhinos of Namibian origin."

Muyunda further emphasised that the ministry will not process such applications, yet several applications have reportedly already been submitted this year.

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