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Step up fight against wildlife crime

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Minister Ndhlovu

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There is an urgent need to step up the fight against wildlife crime and human-induced reduction of species, which have wide-ranging economic, environmental and social impacts in the country, Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry Minister Nqobizitha Mangaliso Ndhlovu says.

Speaking at an event to commemorate World Wildlife Day and African Environment Day (March 3, belated), Minister Ndhlovu said there was need for concerted efforts to save the varied forms of wild fauna and flora

found in the country and to raise awareness of the multitude of benefits that their conservation provides to people.

“The day reminds us of the urgent need to step up and fight against wildlife crime and human-induced reduction of species,” he said.

“It is important to note that over 8 400 species of wild fauna and flora are critically endangered while close to 30 000 more are vulnerable. Based on these estimates, it is suggested that over a million species are threatened with extinction and action needs to be taken now.”

Zimbabwe’s wildlife heritage continues to face threats which include poaching, illegal wildlife trade, overexploitation, illegal mining and habitat loss largely due to land development, agriculture, global warming and invasive species.

The country was working closely with other countries and multilateral agencies to take bold new steps to implement strategies to combat the illegal wildlife trade.

The strategies aim to end poaching and wildlife trafficking in the country. Some of the interventions included increased budgetary support for law enforcement and developing appropriate legislation to control, ban or restrict the use of toxic chemicals used in the indiscriminate killing of vultures, elephants, lions and other wildlife.

Speaking at the same event, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) country director, Olivia Mufute said there was need to strike a balance between development needs and conserving biodiversity.

“It is imperative, therefore, that the quest for development is balanced within planetary limits, to sustain benefits across multi-generations and that nature be effectively harnessed to build diversified and resilient livelihoods,” she said.

“The importance of nature in supporting social and economic development can never be over-emphasized. Around the world, over 50% of Gross Domestic Product is dependent on nature. This makes nature an indispensable resource for social and economic prosperity.”

The human quest for development was exerting enormous pressure on scarce natural heritage, with adverse consequences manifesting in extreme weather conditions, land degradation and biodiversity loss.

Zimbabwe is committed to wildlife conservation and over 26 percent of the country’s land is reserved for wildlife.

These include national parks, safari areas, recreational parks, sanctuaries, botanical gardens and botanical reserves.

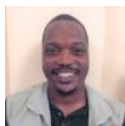
Zimbabwe remains an important frontier in Africa and the world for conserving critically endangered species.

Poaching levels have declined steadily in the country over the past few years as the parks agency strengthened conservation interventions through support from the AWF, other multilateral agencies and the use of new technologies.

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