

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



Twentieth meeting of the Conference of the Parties
Samarkand (Uzbekistan), 24 November – 5 December 2025

Species conservation and trade

Fauna

RHINOCEROSSES (RHINOCEROTIDAE SPP.)

1. This document has been prepared by the Standing Committee and the Secretariat.

Background

2. At its 19th meeting (CoP19; Panama City, 2022), the Conference of the Parties retained [Decision 18.116 and adopted Decisions 19.115 to 19.122](#) on *Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae spp.)*.
3. Further, paragraph 7 of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19) on *Conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses* directs the Secretariat to commission the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) African and Asian Rhino Specialist Groups and TRAFFIC to submit a report on rhinoceroses to the Secretariat prior to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In paragraph 9. b) and c), the Resolution directs the Secretariat to make this report available to the CoP and formulate draft decisions based on this report.
4. In the present document, the report of the Standing Committee in accordance with Decision 19.121 is presented in paragraphs 5 to 10. The report of the Secretariat in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), and additional reporting as appropriate, are presented in paragraphs 11 to 41.

Report of the Standing Committee

Implementation of Decisions 18.116 and 19.115 through 19.122

5. At its 77th meeting (SC77; Geneva, 2023), the Standing Committee considered document [SC77 Doc. 45](#) in which the Secretariat summarized reports from Botswana, China (including Hong Kong SAR of China), Qatar, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. The Secretariat noted that it also requested reporting from Malaysia, Mozambique and Viet Nam, but that these Parties did not respond. Mozambique however did provide relevant information in its report on the implementation of its National Ivory and Rhinoceros Action Plan (NIRAP). After the document deadline for SC77, Malaysia and Viet Nam provided reports in November 2023 that were published as information documents SC77 Inf. 33 and SC77 Inf. 29, respectively.
6. In document SC77 Doc. 45, the Secretariat also addressed emerging issues of concern, noting that Angola seemed to be emerging as an exit point for illegal rhinoceros horn and ivory consignments from Africa to Asia, as well as that Namibia experienced a significant increase in rhinoceros poaching.
7. As indicated in summary record [SC77 SR](#), the Committee:
 - a) welcomed the [Chitwan Declaration for Asian Rhinos Conservation 2023](#) agreed by the five Asian rhinoceros range States;

- b) *welcomed the reduction in poaching incidents observed in Botswana in 2022 and 2023 compared to previous years and encouraged the Party to rapidly progress implementation of its 2023 to 2028 National Anti-Poaching Strategy;*
 - c) *requested the Parties to which Decisions 19.117, 19.118 and 19.119 are directed to take the comments and observations of the Secretariat in paragraphs 47 to 59 of document SC77 Doc.45, as relevant to them, into consideration in their implementation of these respective Decisions;*
 - d) *encouraged Angola and Namibia to review trends associated with the illegal killing of rhinoceroses and illegal trade in rhinoceros specimens affecting them, and the measures and activities they are implementing to address these crimes, to ensure that these measures and activities are effective and adapted as may be needed to respond to any newly identified trends;*
 - e) *noted that Viet Nam submitted a report to the Secretariat on 3 November 2023, which is available as information document SC77 Inf. 29, and that Malaysia submitted a report to the Secretariat on 8 November 2023, which is available as information document SC77 Inf. 33, and requested the two Parties to take any comments and observations from the Secretariat in accordance with recommendation f) i) into consideration in their implementation of Decisions 19.118 and 19.119, as applicable to them;*
 - f) *requested the Secretariat to:*
 - i) *review the reports from Malaysia and Viet Nam available in information documents SC77 Inf. 29 and Inf. 33 and provide its comments and observations to these Parties;*
 - ii) *seek information from the Parties concerned by recommendations c) to e), on activities conducted and measures implemented in accordance with these recommendations; and*
 - iii) *report to the 78th meeting of the Standing Committee on the results of activities conducted in accordance with recommendations f) i) and ii), together with any recommendations the Secretariat may have; and*
 - g) *requested Parties included in the [Directory of illegal trade in rhinoceros horn focal points](#) to immediately inform the Secretariat if the details of their national focal points in the Directory should be updated.*
8. At its 78th meeting (SC78; Geneva, 2025), the Standing Committee considered document [SC78 Doc. 45](#) in which the Secretariat reported that it reviewed the reports from Malaysia and Viet Nam to SC77 and provided its comments and observations to both Parties as requested by the Committee.
9. The Secretariat in document SC78 Doc. 45, summarized reports to SC78 received from Angola, Botswana, Malaysia, Qatar, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam. It further noted that it had not received any reports from China (including Hong Kong SAR of China), Mozambique and Namibia, but that Mozambique provided relevant information in its report on the implementation of its NIRAP. The Secretariat provided its observations and conclusions regarding measures and activities implemented by the Parties mentioned, to address the illegal killing of rhinoceroses and trafficking of rhinoceros horn. The Secretariat also highlighted the need for Parties to actively scale up efforts to collect samples from rhinoceros horn seized within their territories for forensic analysis. China and Namibia provided oral updates at SC78. China highlighted a range of activities it conducted, noting that this had resulted in a significant drop in seizures associated with China in recent years. Namibia drew attention to information document [SC78 Inf. 44](#), noting that poaching within its territory declined in the second half of 2024, following the revision of its antipoaching measures and the implementation of additional measures.
10. As indicated in summary record [SC78 SR](#), the Committee:
- a) *requested the Parties to which Decisions 19.117, 19.118 and 19.119 are directed to take the observations and conclusions of the Secretariat into consideration in their implementation of these respective Decisions;*
 - b) *encouraged Angola and Viet Nam to strengthen their engagement and to pursue information and intelligence exchange, as well as joint operations, to address rhinoceros specimen trafficking affecting them and report on any activities conducted in this regard to the Secretariat for inclusion in its report to the 20th meeting to the Conference of the Parties;*

- c) requested Namibia to continue reviewing trends associated with the illegal killing of rhinoceroses and illegal trade in rhinoceros specimens affecting it, and the measures and activities being implemented to address these crimes, to ensure they are effective and adapted to respond to any newly identified trends;
- d) requested Parties to actively scale up efforts to collect samples from rhinoceros horn seized within their territories for forensic analysis and to fully implement Decision 19.115;
- e) requested the Secretariat to take into consideration the outcomes of the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force to be convened in its report to CoP20;
- f) recommended to the Conference of the Parties the deletion of Decisions 19.121 and 19.122, as they have been implemented; and
- g) agreed to propose to the Conference of the Parties the renewal of Decision 18.116.

Report of the Secretariat

CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force: Implementation of Decision 19.120 and SC78 recommendation e)

11. In collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment of South Africa, the Secretariat convened the [CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting](#) in Pretoria, South Africa, in May 2025. The meeting brought together 70 participants, including national CITES authorities, wildlife officers, customs, police and others from 21 countries. Strategies and proposed actions to further strengthen responses to address rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking were developed, as contained in the *CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force outcome document* (hereinafter “Task Force outcome document”), available as Annex 2 to the present document.
12. The Task Force outcome document addresses key topics, including Strengthening national and regional collaboration; Strengthening international collaboration; National level actions; Prosecution of rhinoceros-related crimes; Addressing illicit financial flows; Sample collection and sharing for forensic analysis; Addressing corruption; Stakeholder engagement; Demand reduction; and Implementation of Task Force Outcomes. The measures and activities outlined in the document provides a strong basis for and will guide Parties in enhancing their responses to poaching and trafficking affecting rhinoceros.
13. As requested by the Standing Committee, the Secretariat took into consideration the outcomes of the Task Force meeting in the formulation of the draft decisions on *Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae spp.)* proposed for adoption at the present meeting.
14. Convening the Task Force meeting was possible thanks to financial support from the European Union, South Africa and Switzerland, and from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC). The Secretariat appreciates the support provided in this regard.

Report on Rhinoceroses in accordance with Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19)

15. As called for in Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), the Secretariat commissioned and worked with the IUCN/SSC, African Rhino Specialist Group (AfRSG) and Asian Rhino Specialist Group (AsRSG) and TRAFFIC, to develop the report on rhinoceroses for the present meeting. The Secretariat made an aggregated summary of the rhinoceros horn stock declarations of Parties available to the IUCN/SSC, AfRSG, AsRSG and TRAFFIC for analysis and inclusion in their reporting pursuant to the Resolution. The Secretariat takes this opportunity to thank the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for providing a financial contribution under the ICCWC Vision 2030 which enabled the Secretariat to commission the report. The report is contained in Annex 3 to the present document, in English only.
16. Due to the limited availability of external funding, the report prepared by IUCN and TRAFFIC for the present meeting is a reduced report. It only partially addresses sub-paragraphs f) and g) in paragraph 7 of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), and paragraph 8 in the Resolution. The Secretariat has received two cost estimates to prepare the report for the 21st meeting of the Conference of the Parties and onwards. Those are included in an information document for the present meeting: one cost estimate is for a reduced report like the one prepared for the present meeting; the other is for a full report covering all aspects outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19).

17. Key matters concerning African and Asian rhinoceroses as outlined in the report prepared for the present meeting are highlighted in its executive summary. The Secretariat highlights some of these matters below and encourages Parties to consult the full report for more detailed information.

Africa

National and continental conservation status and trends for African rhinoceroses

18. At the end of 2024, Africa conserved an estimated 22,540 rhinoceroses, which comprised 6,788 black (*Diceros bicornis*) and 15,752 white (*Ceratotherium simum*) rhinoceroses. This is similar to figures reported at CoP19 (22,137 comprising 6,195 black and 15,942 white rhinoceroses at the end of 2021).

Legal trade in African rhinoceroses

19. In total, 276 live African rhinoceroses were traded between 2022 and 2024 (see the report for further details). Six black (*D. bicornis*) and 373 white (*C. simum*) rhinoceros hunts took place in Namibia and South Africa in the period 2022 to 2024. For these two Parties, rhinoceros hunting occurs at low levels relative to national populations (0.05% to 0.18% of black and 0.5% to 1.3% of white rhinoceros in Namibia each year, and 0.79% to 0.91% of white rhinoceros in South Africa each year). The report highlights that case studies show that well-regulated legal hunting can generate significant revenue—often surpassing ecotourism—for community conservancies, reinforcing the shift toward participatory conservation models that prioritize fair socioeconomic benefits for local communities as essential to long-term rhinoceros conservation success. In 2022, the World Bank launched the Wildlife Conservation Bond that mobilized over USD \$150 million to support black rhinoceros conservation in South Africa. It is noted in the report that this results-based financing model, where investor returns depend on rhinoceros population growth, sets a precedent for linking biodiversity outcomes to financial incentives. The report states that by the end of 2024, rhinoceros conservation was increasingly seen as needing to generate revenue to cover costs and thus viewed as a trade-linked enterprise, whereby financial instruments, ecotourism, and community-based ventures transform wildlife protection into a valued land-use that also contributes to local development.

Illegal killing of rhinoceroses in Africa

20. In Africa, 516 incidents of illegal killing (poaching) were recorded in 2024. This is lower than the 540 in 2021, 567 in 2022 and 596 in 2023. The average annual continent-wide poaching rate dropped to 2.15% of the continental population in 2024, the lowest rate since 2011 and below the critical threshold (3.5%) above which rhinoceros populations are expected to decline. In 2024, the continental rhinoceros population growth was lower than expected considering the 2.15% poaching rate, but the report stated that this is due to factors such as the impacts of drought, poor population reporting and others. The report notes that in early 2025, there appeared to be an increase in the rate of rhinoceroses being lost to poaching.

Asia

National and continental conservation status and trends for Asian rhinoceroses

21. At the end of March 2025, greater one-horned rhinoceroses (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) had an estimated population of 4,075, with 3,323 in India and 752 in Nepal. This is slightly higher than the figures reported at CoP19 (4,014 greater one-horned rhinoceroses).
22. The most recent estimate for Sumatran rhinoceroses (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is 34 to 47 individuals, the same as reported at CoP19. In 2023, Indonesian authorities reported a population of 76 Javan rhinoceroses (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) in the country. Since then, it was determined that as many as 26 Javan rhinoceroses were illegally killed (as further elaborated on in paragraph 24 of the present document). The current minimum estimated number of Javan rhinoceroses is thus 50, a significant decline from the figure reported at CoP19.

Legal trade in Asian rhinoceroses

23. The report states that no legal trade in Asian rhinoceroses was reported in the period 2022 to 2024.

Illegal killing of rhinoceroses in Asia

24. Between January 2021 and December 2024, nine greater one-horned rhinoceroses (*R. unicornis*) were illegally killed in India, and four in Nepal. After Indonesian authorities received a report in May 2023 about

missing camera traps and a noticeable decline in rhinoceros activity, investigations by the police revealed that, as many as 26 Javan rhinoceroses (*R. sondaicus*) were killed by two poaching groups in Ujung Kulon National Park, Indonesia, between 2019 and 2023. Further information on this is provided in the report, indicating that arrests were made in this regard and that convictions were secured with prison sentences of up to 12 years, as well as additional fines.

Rhinoceros horn trafficking and enforcement efforts

25. Horns continue to be the most prevalent rhinoceros specimen seized, but the weight and estimated number continued to decline from the high observed in 2019. Between 2021 and 2023, an estimated 676 to 853 rhinoceros horns were sourced annually into illegal trade (compared to 1,531 to 1,729 annually reported at CoP19). However, it is noted in the report that this reduction is partly attributable to methodological adjustments accounting for widespread dehorning (covering ~48% of the rhinoceros population). Without such adjustments, the estimated annual average would have been 1,160 to 1,289 horns annually.
26. In the period 2021 to 2023, an estimated 792 to 894 trafficked horns were recovered through law enforcement efforts. Accounting for the recovered horns, it is estimated that a total of 1,134 to 1,767 horns remained in illegal trade from 2021 to 2023, which represents an annual average of 378 to 589.
27. The report notes that the continued decline in estimated illegally sourced horns is likely attributable to the successful implementation of dehorning by range State Parties and private owners to reduce poaching pressures. Despite the decline in rhinoceros horn seizures of large weight, seizures of rhinoceros specimens are often made in conjunction with other illegal wildlife specimens, which suggests the continued involvement of organized crime networks.

Parties most affected by poaching and illegal trade in rhinoceros' horn

28. On the basis of the report in Annex 3, the Secretariat focuses its reporting below on the five Parties most affected by illegal trade in rhinoceros horn during the period 2021 to 2023, in terms of illegal trade volumes (i.e., total weight and number of horns seized in seizures made by the Party and seizures in which the Party was implicated in as part of the illegal trade chain). As shown in Table 11 of the report (ordered from high to low in terms of illegal trade volume), these are: South Africa, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. All five Parties were also identified as affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking in the report to CoP19 and Decisions directed to them were adopted at CoP19 (see documents SC77 Doc. 45 and SC78 Doc. 45 for detailed reporting regarding measures implemented and activities undertaken by these Parties).
29. In addition to the five Parties mentioned above, the Secretariat also addresses below matters related to Indonesia, considering the significant decline in its Javan rhinoceros (*R. sondaicus*) population.

South Africa

30. Rhinoceros poaching numbers in South Africa peaked in 2014, with 1,215 rhinoceroses poached in the country that year. After 2014, poaching numbers consistently declined until 2020 during which 394 rhinoceroses were poached. In 2021, the number of rhinoceroses poached in South Africa increased, with 451 rhinoceroses poached, and since then poaching numbers varied slightly with 448 rhinoceroses poached in 2022, 499 in 2023 and 420 in 2024. In the [first three months of 2025](#), South Africa lost 103 rhinoceroses to poaching.
31. Similar to the report to CoP19, the report in Annex 3 again identifies South Africa as the Party most affected by rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking. Important to note is that the report indicates that most seizures related to South Africa were made in the country (65 seizures totalling 1,216 kg out of 73 seizures totalling 1,483 kg), demonstrating substantial effort by the Party to intercept illegal trade. Also worth noting is a successful controlled delivery conducted between authorities in South Africa and Viet Nam, that resulted in the seizure of 139 kg of rhinoceros horn, one of the largest seizures made in the period 2021 to 2023.

Malaysia

32. In the report to CoP19, Malaysia was the Party fourth most affected by rhinoceros specimen trafficking. In the report to the present meeting, it is now the Party second most affected. Most of the illegal trade related to Malaysia involved seizures implicating the Party (eight seizures made elsewhere totalling 410 kg, compared to one seizure in Malaysia totalling 29 kg). It is important to note that for all the seizures made

outside Malaysia implicating it as part of the illegal trade chain, the illegal consignments were intercepted by other Parties before reaching Malaysia. Hence here was no opportunity for authorities in Malaysia to act on these within its territory. The report further highlights that Malaysia demonstrated commendable efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade, including taking part in “Operation Golden Strike” in 2021 which led to the arrest and prosecution of two suspects smuggling 45 kg of rhino horns between South Africa and Malaysia. Furthermore, the Party participated in a Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meeting (RIACM) on rhinoceros horn trafficking held in March 2023, to exchange information with authorities from Mozambique, Qatar and South Africa.

33. Malaysia amended its Wildlife Conservation Act in 2022 to increase penalties and sentences for crimes involving wildlife specimens. In 2024, court proceedings commenced for two individuals arrested in Malaysia in connection with a 2021 seizure of 50 rhinoceros horn pieces and the case is still ongoing. Notably, no further seizures implicating Malaysia have been reported since 2022, which may reflect the impact of intensified national and international enforcement actions.

Viet Nam

34. Like in the report to CoP19, Viet Nam is identified in the present report as the Party third most affected by rhinoceros specimen trafficking. In the period 2021 to 2023, information regarding nine seizures made elsewhere indicated Viet Nam as the destination country, while 10 were made by authorities in Viet Nam. Seizures made by authorities in Viet Nam totalled 205 kg of rhinoceros horn, while seizures implicating the Party along the illegal trade chain totalled 83 kg. Also for Viet Nam all the illegal consignments implicating it as part of the illegal trade chain were seized elsewhere and before reaching Viet Nam. Hence also there was no opportunity for its authorities to act on these within its territory. Overall, six seizures involving Viet Nam also included other illegal wildlife contraband, such as elephant ivory, pangolin scales and bear bile, some consisting of large quantities or weight (e.g., 80 bottles of bear bile, over 2,700 elephant tusks and over 5 tons of pangolin scales).
35. Between 2021 and 2023, there were several prosecutions and convictions linked to large-scale seizures in Viet Nam. Information regarding the controlled delivery conducted between authorities in South Africa and Viet Nam (see paragraph 31) indicates that collaboration at international level also took place. The report however highlights that improved collaboration with other Parties on the illegal trade chain associated with illegal consignments destined to Viet Nam is needed. At SC78, the Standing Committee encouraged Angola and Viet Nam to strengthen their engagement and to pursue information and intelligence exchange, as well as joint operations, to address rhinoceros specimen trafficking affecting them and report on any activities conducted in this regard to the Secretariat for inclusion in its report to the present meeting. The Secretariat received no reporting from either of the Parties.

Qatar

36. In the report to CoP19, Qatar was the Party seventh most affected by rhinoceros specimen trafficking. In the report to the present meeting, the Party is now the fourth most affected. Only five seizures were associated with the Party in the period 2021 to 2023, but these involved large illegal consignments (ranging from 10 kg to 46 kg), with a total weight of 135 kg. Of these, four seizures were made by authorities in Qatar, while one seizure that implicated the Party was made by authorities in Viet Nam. In its report to SC78, Qatar indicated it had increased international collaboration, strengthened security at its international airport and provided training at national level to raise awareness about wildlife crime affecting it. Information reported in paragraph 32 of the present document regarding the RIACM on rhinoceros horn trafficking held in March 2023 is relevant to Qatar and indicates progress regarding international collaboration.

United Arab Emirates

37. In the report to CoP19, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the Party sixth most affected by rhinoceros specimen trafficking. In the report to the present meeting, it is now the Party fifth most affected. In the period 2021 to 2023, four seizures made by Parties elsewhere that collectively involved over 100 kg of rhinoceros horn, implicated the UAE as transit country in the illegal trade chain. For three of these four seizure incidents, the UAE did not have an opportunity to intercept the illegal consignment because it was seized before reaching the UAE.

Conclusions of the Secretariat concerning Parties most affected by illegal trade in rhinoceros' horn

38. The report in Annex 3 prepared for the present meeting, highlights that there are promising examples of enforcement and conservation actions that have proven effective in stabilizing or growing some rhinoceros populations. The Secretariat notes that information in the [3rd edition of the World Wildlife Crime Report](#) also shows that progress was made and that a combination of efforts from Parties yielded positive outcomes and resulted in the reduction of trafficking affecting some species, including rhinoceroses. However, threats remain and there is no room for complacency. The gains made can quickly be reversed in the absence of vigilance and persistence.
39. Figure 8 in Annex 3 to the present document contains information on illegal trade links between the Parties most affected by crimes involving rhinoceros in the period 2021 to 2023. This information aims to provide additional insight into the dynamics of this illegal trade. Malaysia, Qatar, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Viet Nam are encouraged to take this information into consideration in their implementation of measures and activities to address crimes affecting rhinoceroses.
40. The Secretariat further notes that the strategies and proposed actions outlined in the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting outcome document provide a strong basis for Parties to further strengthen responses to address rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking. In this regard the Secretariat proposes draft decisions 20.AA, 20.CC and 20.DD in Annex 1 to the present document. Considering the comprehensive nature of the Task Force meeting outcomes, the Secretariat proposes that Decisions 19.115 to 19.120 be deleted, as they have been implemented or what they envisage are sufficiently covered by the strategies and proposed actions in the outcome document.
41. Regarding Indonesia, in the light of the significant number of Javan rhinoceroses (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) illegally killed and the delay in detecting these killings, it is essential that the Party scale up efforts to strengthen measures and carry out activities to monitor and protect its Javan rhinoceroses population. Measures and activities implemented should also be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain effective and are adapted as needed. In this regard, the Secretariat proposes draft decision 20.BB in Annex 1 to the present document.

Recommendations

42. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:
 - a) maintain Decision 18.116 and adopt the draft decisions on *Rhinoceroses (Rhinocerotidae spp.)* in Annex 1 to the present document; and
 - b) delete Decisions 19.115 to 19.122.

DRAFT DECISIONS ON *RHINOCEROSES (RHINOCEROTIDAE SPP.)*

Directed to Parties where illegal markets for rhinoceros horn exist

- 18.116** Parties in which illegal markets for rhinoceros horn exist are encouraged to develop demand reduction programmes targeted at key identified audiences, taking into consideration the provisions in Resolution Conf. 17.4 (Rev. CoP19) on *Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species* and taking advantage of the experience and expertise developed in other jurisdictions and by other organizations. Parties are urged to close those markets that contribute to poaching or illegal trade.

Directed to Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking

- 20.AA** Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking are encouraged to fully implement the strategies and proposed actions outlined in the *CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting outcome document* as relevant to them, and to report on the implementation of this Decision to the Secretariat.

Directed to Indonesia

- 20.BB** Indonesia is encouraged to strengthen measures and carry out activities to monitor and protect its Javan rhinoceroses (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*) population, and to review regularly these measures and activities to ensure that they remain effective and are adapted as needed to prevent, detect and address poaching.

Directed to the Secretariat

- 20.CC** The Secretariat shall seek information from Parties on their implementation of Decisions 18.116, 20.AA and 20.BB and report to the Standing Committee on the work undertaken by Parties together with any recommendations it may have.

Directed to the Standing Committee

- 20.DD** The Standing Committee shall consider the report and recommendations of the Secretariat in accordance with Decision 20.CC and make recommendations to the Parties or the Secretariat, as appropriate.

CITES RHINOCEROS ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE MEETING

Pretoria, South Africa, 26 to 30 May 2025

OUTCOME DOCUMENT



As required by Decision 19.120, paragraph a), participants in the CITES Rhinoceros Enforcement Task Force meeting developed strategies and proposed actions to further strengthen responses to address rhinoceros poaching and associated trafficking. These are listed below.

Strengthening national and regional collaboration

1. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking should where not yet done consider establishing, and where in place utilize:
 - a) national mechanisms to facilitate and enhance coordination, information sharing, analysis and support to investigations, also with a view towards international collaboration. These mechanisms should clearly set out operational standards, roles and responsibilities of relevant authorities. An example of such a mechanism is the Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre (EEFC) established in South Africa.
 - b) a central national database for the capture and analysis of data and information on crimes involving rhinoceros, to generate intelligence for use by national agencies responsible for investigations.
2. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking should without curtailing informal inter-agency collaboration, where not yet done consider establishing regional forums and where in place strengthen and utilize such forums to:
 - a) facilitate personal interaction on rhinoceros-related crimes and other crimes affecting wildlife, strengthening professional working relationships and building trust; and
 - b) agree protocol that will facilitate real-time sharing of information on crimes affecting rhinoceros and associated *modus operandi*, as well as the use of such information.
3. Parties should raise awareness among their national authorities responsible for the investigation of rhinoceros-related crimes, about information exchange and cooperation platforms that exist within their regions and encourage their use. For example the various Wildlife Information eXchange (TWIX) platforms such as [AFRICA-TWIX](#), [Eastern Africa-TWIX](#), [EU-TWIX](#), [SADC-TWIX](#), [West Africa-TWIX](#), or any other similar platforms.

4. Parties where Transfrontier Conservation Area Initiatives exists, are encouraged to explore opportunities to through such initiatives strengthen strategies and approaches to address crimes involving rhinoceros.
5. Intergovernmental law enforcement bodies, such as the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation ([EAPCCO](#)), Lusaka Agreement Task Force ([LATEF](#)), Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organisation ([SARPCCO](#)) and Wildlife Enforcement Networks, such as the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network ([SAWEN](#)), are encouraged to prioritize matters related to rhinoceros poaching and trafficking in their work programmes and support Parties by initiating cooperative law enforcement activities and operations to address such crimes.
6. Parties are encouraged to undertake activities to strengthen the capacity of agencies responsible for wildlife law enforcement by:
 - a) initiating joint capacity-building programmes aimed at addressing crimes affecting rhinoceros, including sharing of information on national initiatives and procedures, applicable legislation and technologies deployed in different countries;
 - b) where appropriate, consider undertaking study visits, exchange programmes or secondments between countries with significant volumes of illegal trade between them; and
 - c) where possible, sharing information on cases, undertaking joint investigations, as well as joint interviewing of suspects.

Strengthening international collaboration

7. Parties should, where appropriate, explore opportunities to establish informal communication channels with authorities in countries that are frequently associated with rhinoceros-related crimes to facilitate communication, information sharing and preliminary engagement, which may, if necessary, be formalized at a later stage through other channels.
8. Parties should fully implement paragraph 1. e), g) and h) of [Resolution Conf. 9.14 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Conservation of and trade in African and Asian rhinoceroses](#) to facilitate the country of origin, transit or destination to fully investigate the entire illegal trade chain by:
 - a) immediately bringing the seizure of rhinoceros specimens made within their territory to the attention of authorities in countries of origin, transit and destination, as applicable;
 - b) collecting samples from rhinoceros horns seized for forensic analysis, to link such horns to crime scenes and implicated suspects and to promote successful prosecution; and
 - c) where possible, using the [Form for collection and sharing of data on rhinoceros horn seizures and on samples for forensic analysis](#) contained in the Annex to Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19).
9. Parties are encouraged to:
 - a) share information on investigation methodologies, tools and best practices, as part of collaborative efforts;
 - b) consider the development of mechanisms to facilitate international cooperation, such as Memoranda of Understanding; and
 - c) when appropriate, in accordance with the provisions in paragraph 2. d) of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), pursue law enforcement cooperation through existing law enforcement mechanisms and by better utilizing such mechanisms to curtail rhinoceros poaching and trafficking, for example relevant agreements and treaties on extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal matters.
10. Parties are encouraged to:
 - a) fully utilize the tools and capabilities provided by INTERPOL, including criminal databases;
 - b) actively pursue use of INTERPOL [Notices](#) to combat crimes involving rhinoceroses;

- c) consider and promote the use of the INTERPOL [Silver Notice](#) designed to assist in locating, identifying and obtaining information about criminal assets, including properties, vehicles, financial accounts and businesses linked to illicit activities;
 - d) strengthen channels of communication between authorities responsible for wildlife crime investigations and their INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) and consider opportunities to involve the NCB in cases being investigated; and
 - e) when arresting offenders, report such arrests through the INTERPOL I-24/7 global police communications system for inclusion in and verification against the INTERPOL criminal databases.
11. Parties should, where appropriate, encourage their national Customs Administrations to pursue information exchange and collaboration on crimes affecting rhinoceros drawing upon the mechanisms provided by the [International Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance for the Prevention, Investigation and Repression of Custom Offences](#).
 12. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking, should actively engage in initiatives developed to promote international collaboration and engagement such as the Wildlife Inter-Regional Enforcement (WIRE) meetings organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Regional Investigative and Analytical Case Meetings (RIACMs) organized by INTERPOL.
 13. INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO) are invited to target rhinoceros as a priority species in global operations arranged to combat wildlife crime, such as the Thunder series of operations.
 14. The Secretariat is requested to explore opportunities to further strengthen and expand the [Directory of illegal trade in rhinoceros horn focal points](#) maintained on its website, by mapping the details of different relevant authorities from key countries responsible for law enforcement related to rhinoceros poaching and trafficking.

National level actions

15. Parties should:
 - a) where not yet done, ensure that wildlife crimes, including crimes involving rhinoceroses are recognized as serious in national legislation and prioritized for attention in the work programmes of national wildlife and other law enforcement agencies;
 - b) where not yet done, adopt and implement comprehensive legislation and enforcement controls by fully implementing the provisions outlined in paragraph 1. a) to d) of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19);
 - c) where needed, for complex investigations, develop methodologies and Standard Operating Procedures to provide guidance to officials from different agencies that have a role in the investigation of crimes involving rhinoceros, to ensure that these officials can mobilize specialized investigation techniques or know how to seek assistance from appropriate authorities with experience in the use of such techniques; and
 - d) for crimes involving rhinoceroses, seek to mobilize, where appropriate, the deployment of specialized investigative techniques and financial investigations to target illicit financial flows with the aim of going beyond low-level offenders (poachers) and targeting those managing and organizing the illicit activities.
16. Parties are encouraged to gather and analyze data and information related to crimes involving rhinoceros:
 - a) to identify the most prominent national ports of entry and exit within their territories targeted by criminal groups; and
 - b) to implement additional measures to increase awareness amongst authorities working at these ports and provide them with the necessary training and resources to detect and respond to such crimes.
17. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking should, where not yet done, develop rhinoceros-specific risk profiles to target cargo, luggage and passengers moving on known trafficking routes, and regularly review their risk management practices to ensure that they remain relevant and effective.

18. Rhinoceros range States should, where not yet done, actively seek opportunities to establish informer networks, including amongst local communities, to promote the gathering of information and engagement with relevant authorities.
19. Parties should fully implement paragraph 2. a) of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), by marking, registering and securing their rhinoceros specimen stockpiles and declaring them to the CITES Secretariat each year by 28 February in the [standardized format](#) provided.
20. Parties with live rhinoceros and rhinoceros horn stockpiles are encouraged to collect samples for analysis to be recorded in a centralized database, such as [RhODIS®](#), and the Secretariat, other organizations and donors are encouraged to seek or provide financial support for such efforts.
21. Parties are encouraged to ensure that national level mechanisms are in place to accurately capture data on crimes involving rhinoceros and to report such data in a timely and standardized manner to relevant databases maintained by entities such as INTERPOL and the WCO, and to the [CITES Illegal Trade Database](#) following guidance as provided in the [Guidelines for the preparation and submission of the CITES annual illegal trade report](#).
22. Parties are encouraged to actively explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can increasingly be used to respond to and address wildlife crime, including rhinoceros-related crimes, and inform the Secretariat of any best practices identified for this information to also be communicated to other Parties, as appropriate.
23. Parties are encouraged to in accordance with paragraph 6 of Resolution Conf. 9.14 (Rev. CoP19), implement legislation and enforcement controls to prevent horns that are part of legally acquired trophies from being used for purposes other than hunting trophies and to ensure that these trophies remain in lawful possession.

Prosecution of rhinoceros-related crimes

24. Parties should implement programmes and activities to sensitize prosecutors and judges on the seriousness of wildlife crime, including crimes involving rhinoceroses.
25. Parties should in cases related to wildlife crime, including rhinoceros poaching and trafficking, where appropriate:
 - a) consider early engagement of prosecutors in investigations, in support of strengthened case building that could facilitate improved conviction rates;
 - b) as standard practice, pursue the presentation of evidence in judicial processes to highlight aggravating factors that make the crime more deserving of harsher penalties, including where applicable drawing attention to the impact of these crimes on sovereignty, tourism, conservation and local communities;
 - c) consider inviting representatives from communities that rely on conservation for their livelihoods to deliver testimony in aggravation of sentencing or the use of impact statements that reflect ecological and/or socioeconomic impacts;
 - d) advocate for penalties that include provisions for compensation aimed at the restitution of environmental damage, the recovery of all costs incurred by the investigation and prosecution, including costs related to the collection of samples and forensic analyses; and
 - e) identify investigators and prosecutors with extensive experience regarding wildlife crime cases to act as ambassadors and draw upon them to provide guidance and practical training to their counterparts, where needed;
 - f) consider the proportionality of criminal justice responses to ensure that the greatest enforcement effort and most severe sanctions are directed to those playing the most serious and harmful roles in organized wildlife crime; and
 - g) encourage targeted awareness-raising through the media about convictions, sentences and asset forfeiture to ensure effective deterrents against rhinoceros poaching and trafficking.

26. Parties should undertake activities to improve awareness amongst authorities responsible for wildlife crime investigations about the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and how its provisions can be used to facilitate exchange of evidence, collaboration and addressing wildlife crime.
27. Parties are encouraged to, where needed, reach out to UNODC and request support with the development of Rapid Reference Guides designed for investigators and prosecutors that contain information on relevant legislation, key points to prove in court, case analysis, information and evidence gathering and prosecution and sentencing guidance.

Addressing illicit financial flows

28. Parties are encouraged to:
 - a) undertake capacity-building activities on addressing illicit financial flows to raise awareness and knowledge among wildlife crime investigators and promote the integration of financial crime investigations in the investigation of wildlife crime, including rhinoceros related crimes;
 - b) implement initiatives that facilitate engagement among wildlife law enforcement experts, financial intelligence units and representatives of the banking sector, to raise awareness of the serious nature of wildlife crime and the importance of identifying illicit financial flows associated with it; and
 - c) gather information on successful case studies and make these available to the broader law enforcement community for reference and use.
29. Parties are encouraged to where not yet done establish, and where in place as needed realign:
 - a) national-level inter-agency mechanisms for coordination and bringing together authorities investigating rhinoceros-related crimes and those with anti-money laundering expertise, including from financial intelligence units, for example through undertakings such as the [Blue Rhino Task Team in Namibia](#); and
 - b) public-private financial information sharing partnerships between the banking and public sectors to detect, prevent and disrupt financial crimes, for example through undertakings such as the South African Anti-Money Laundering Integrated Task Force (SAMLIT).
30. Parties are encouraged to, as appropriate, engage in initiatives such as the United for Wildlife [Financial Task Force](#) and its Regional Chapters.
31. INTERPOL is invited to raise awareness on the Silver Notice, including the rules governing its publication.
32. Parties are invited to bring to the attention of national authorities responsible for wildlife law enforcement the tools and resources for addressing illicit financial flows associated with wildlife crime available on the [Enforcement page](#) on the CITES Secretariat website, such as the [Trade-Based Money Laundering: Risk Indicators](#) developed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the document on [Financial Investigations into Wildlife Crime](#) developed by Egmont Centre of Financial Intelligence Unit Excellence and Leadership (ECOFEL).

Sample collection and sharing for forensic analysis

33. Parties are encouraged to, where appropriate, use the [Procedure for Rhino horn DNA Sampling](#) guide developed by South Africa for information on steps to follow when a seizure is made and samples are to be shared with South Africa for forensic analysis.
34. Parties are encouraged to, for law enforcement purposes, use the simplified procedures provided for in [Resolution Conf. 12.3 \(Rec. CoP19\) on Permits and certificates](#), to share samples from rhinoceros horn seized for forensic analysis.
35. Regarding the RhODIS® database maintained by South Africa, it is noted that it contains the most extensive records for African rhinoceros available in the world, therefore Parties are encouraged to:
 - a) submit samples (of horn or extracted DNA) from rhinoceros horn seized within their territories to South Africa for forensic analysis aimed at linking such horns to crime scenes and implicated suspects; and
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- b) if appropriate, request access to the [eRhODIS®](#) mobile application, which facilitates standardized digital collection of data regarding rhinoceros specimens seized and the samples collected.
36. South Africa is requested to identify and implement appropriate protocols to provide feedback to Parties on the results of the comparison with the *RhODIS®* database and any other information, as appropriate.
37. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking should, where challenges exist regarding the exchange of samples for forensic analysis, consider undertaking country visits to agree on processes that could facilitate such exchanges and address any capacity building needs that may exist.
38. South Africa is encouraged to register the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) forensic laboratory on the CITES [Directory of laboratories that conduct wildlife forensic testing](#), ensuring compliance with its requirements, to encourage the submission of rhinoceros horn samples from Parties, and ensure the standardization of forensic testing.
39. Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking should identify their national authority responsible for collecting rhinoceros samples for forensic analysis and inform the Secretariat accordingly, so that the details may be included in the CITES [Directory of illegal trade in rhinoceros horn focal points](#).
40. UNODC is requested to, in collaboration with its partners in the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC), where possible, promote enhanced engagement between forensic laboratories in Africa and Asia through the initiatives it supports, such as the African Wildlife Forensic Network.
41. The Secretariat is requested to, subject to external funding, work with its ICWC partners to engage laboratories conducting wildlife forensic testing to explore opportunities for collaboration between those laboratories, such as sharing expertise, standardizing processes, conducting inter-laboratory comparisons and undertaking joint work.

Addressing corruption

42. Parties affected by rhinoceros-related crimes should:
- a) pursue full implementation of [Resolution Conf. 17.6 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Prohibiting, preventing, detecting and countering corruption, which facilitates activities conducted in violation of the Convention](#), including in the context of illegal trade in rhinoceros specimens;
 - b) implement measures and integrity policies, including integrity testing, vetting, codes of conduct and ethics for staff to promote honest behaviour, prevent misconduct and uphold accountability among authorities responsible for the protection of rhinoceros and the investigation of crimes affecting them;
 - c) undertake corruption risk assessments to identify high corruption risk areas and develop and implement strategies to counter corruption, including by developing corruption prevention policies, and whistle blower protection policies;
 - d) publicize information on arrests and prosecutions related to corruption to send a clear and deterrent message that such conduct will not be tolerated; and
 - e) draw upon the tools developed by the UNODC to address and mitigate corruption risks available on the [Enforcement page](#) of the CITES Secretariat website, such as the [Scaling Back Corruption - A Guide on Addressing Corruption for Wildlife Management Authorities](#).

Stakeholder engagement

43. Parties are encouraged to:
- a) pursue enhancing collaboration between relevant governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders on the implementation of measures to prevent and combat rhinoceros poaching and trafficking, where appropriate, taking into consideration successful collaboration models that delivered positive results, such as those deployed between governmental agencies and the Wildlife Justice Commission; and

- b) engage private sector entities, such as airport security companies, airlines and other stakeholders working at ports known to be associated with rhinoceros specimen trafficking, to ensure that they are aware of these crimes, raising awareness among their staff and know which authorities to inform about any suspected illegal activities.

Demand reduction

44. Parties in which illegal markets for rhinoceros horn exist are encouraged to:

- a) fully implement the provisions of [Resolution Conf. 17.4 \(Rev. CoP19\) on Demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species](#) and draw upon the [Guidance for CITES Parties to develop and implement demand reduction strategies to combat illegal trade in CITES-listed species](#) to guide the development of well targeted demand reduction strategies;
- b) collaborate with non-governmental organizations or academic institutions to conduct surveys and further research and monitoring of online and physical markets to identify where high priority areas to address exist, and to assess and monitor the impacts and effectiveness of implemented behaviour change efforts; and
- c) engage individuals such as social media influencers, prominent persons, cultural influencers and religious leaders who can most effectively reach out to consumers.

Implementation of Task Force Outcomes

- 45. All Parties, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, donors and other entities are encouraged to support Parties affected by rhinoceros poaching and trafficking with the implementation of the strategies and proposed actions outlined in this Task Force outcomes document and take them into consideration in the development of their work programmes and activities.
- 46. Parties and the Secretariat are requested to report on progress in the implementation of the above strategies and proposed actions at the 81st and 82nd meetings of the CITES Standing Committee.