

**SUBMISSION TO RHINO ISSUE MANAGEMENT BY:
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15th August 2012**

On the 13th of July I attended the first of the so called Rhino workshops at Midrand where all of us were informed of the “facts” of just where the South African Rhino herd is and also where South Africa stands with respect to its position in the scenario of the conservation of the two species of Rhino found in Africa namely Black and White. These hearings were divided into three subjects, Conservation, Security and Trade, each subject with its unique nuances and the perceptions placed by the participants.

Theodore Adorno (1903-1969) a modern day philosopher once said, and I believe this to be pertinent to these discussions: “The conversion of all questions of truth into questions of power...has attacked the very heart of the distinction between True and False..”

With that quote in mind I need to pass comment on the three issues, bearing in mind of course that I am anti trade, because of which I might be accused of a certain subjectivity.

Conservation.

Richard Emslie, Jo Shaw and Josef Okori gave what in their view was the situation with regard to Rhino’s in general and David Mabunda and Hector Magome gave us the Sanparks view, in particular the issues around Rhino numbers, the rates of growth and the effect of Poaching and more intensively the loss of income to Sanparks as a result of poaching, that reduction in numbers seriously eroding the “stock” available for sale by Sanparks.

Richard Emslie makes the point that by giving Rhinos a “value” people have “invested” in Rhino and so the range of the animals has increased exponentially. He is correct but to this exercise there is a sinister result to a timeline that has been followed. When there is an “investment” there has to be a “return” and when that is insufficient in economic terms there is a maximisation process that is undertaken and so the numbers are made to balance. In the Rhino’s case we have undergone that process and now that we have the maximisation process we are beginning to impinge on issues of Conservation, the statement made by Emslie is troubling, “If the overall herd increases in number as a result of these activities, then surely we are acting correctly”. Surely conservation is just that, conservation, and surely the sudden demand (since 2008) that is evidenced by the massive increase in poaching is a result of giving the Rhinos a value? In simple terms the Rhino’s now having a value is beginning to impinge on the process of conservation.

In the two addresses made by David Mabunda and Hector Magome, some issues of note that need attention were raised, the first is the issue around the border, yes it is understood that there is a Treaty in place between Mozambique and South Africa re the issue of Transfrontier Parks and it needs to be massaged which in the long term will talk to the issues of conservation

and reserves that are joined across borders, but until laws in both countries are aligned and until the issue of cross border insurgency is taken care of there can be absolutely no way that the border is allowed to “leak”, whether it be by animals or by humans. Until such time as this holocaust against our Rhino and dare I say many other animals is placed under COMPLETE control there needs to be a temporary barrier between the two countries, Sisal or a species of Euphorbia being the issue here. David Mabunda also abdicates his role as the CEO of Sanparks when he refuses to answer a direct question regarding the stance of Sanparks vis a vis Trade, he does after all head up the largest conservation body in South Africa which has over time enjoyed an excellent reputation amongst its peers, one would believe that, it would be Sanparks that would advise the Minister, who after all is a mere politician, not the other way around as he would have us all believe, we must of course be mindful of the need of Sanparks to generate funds so a certain subjectivity would be expected.

Hector Magome, indicated that the issue of Civil Society at large was telling, and in the context of the current scourge and increase in poaching indicated that the sale of a large number of Rhino’s to a single individual (John Hume) had had a marked impact. Of course in practical terms he had realised that Hume and others like him are fundamental to what is going on, in that their “investments” were in fact not performing and they now needed to ratchet that situation up to, what to them, would be an acceptable level. This statement by Magome is, in my view a game changer, as there has crept back a certain ethic about what it is conservation should be.

Jo Shaw, noted that TRAFFIC in their ongoing process of interrogating the numbers of Rhino in private hands had a certain lack of cooperation from some owners. There are many rumours no doubt based on some facts that there are private stockpiles of horns, issues around pseudo poaching and so on, as the value of a complete animal and its costs of maintenance, versus the value of horn on its own and the relative costs of keeping that are concerned.

In conservation terms the issues of so called Concurrent Powers of the Provinces and the State were highlighted, while the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and KZN were highlighted as being very good when it came to deploying budgeted for resources others, particularly Limpopo, North West and Mpumalanga were incredibly bad, the representative from Mpumalanga expressed her dismay that they had no budget for fuel to visit some of the reserves under their control, naming Andover and Manyeleti in particular, and so had almost no idea of the conservation situation, this is incredibly bad as Manyeleti in particular, sharing a boundary with the Kruger is important. The National Department must work with these errant Provincial bodies to ensure the proper deployment of resources so that there is performance. Conservation agencies cannot just be bodies that create employment and little else!

The issue of input by Civil Society has to be explored, Social Media has a role no doubt, while social media and all of its participants are quick to point to the

perceived shortcomings of Government and in this case the Department of Environmental Affairs and its subsidiaries like Sanparks and all the agencies of the Provinces, they in turn must accept that they have to act responsibly and to work with and not against the organs of State, in their turn State and all that that involves need to recognise that Civil Society and Social Media in particular are a resource that is invaluable. Some form of conduit needs to be found to enable cooperation, of opinion, criticism, financial help and request, knowledge transfer and the deployment of all of those resources. All of the Social Media groups need to understand that the price of cooperation is seriousness, credibility and most of all honesty. There has to be through this proposed conduit a mechanism where recognition can be obtained, where there is interaction and that there is mutual respect. Civil Society just want quality and accountability, they also, because of the emotion involved want to be able to participate. The issue around statistics is a case in point why do we have to go through the DEA for information and statistics when in fact this problem involves us all?

A week or so ago, a friend was invited to a Rhino Capture in the Kruger as part of a process by one or other company, while he was there he spoke with one or two of the Rangers on the ground, the issue of Rhino numbers, particularly in the Kruger was raised, information at that happening was, that in fact the numbers being touted by Kruger management were incorrect and in fact the numbers were actually far less, now this particular issue comes up over and over again, we were told by Richard Emslie that the numbers given are in fact correct, surely it's time now to address this issue and allay all fears. I have been told that a Rhino census will be conducted during the course of this year, may I ask that one of David Mabunda, Hector Magome or the Minister herself make an announcement in this regard and when the census is carried out that there is transparency and full accountability to society at large, to once and for all put this issue to bed.

The issuing of Permits continually comes up with standards across the various Provinces varying, I have been told that at the Cites meeting a week or so ago South Africa's delegate assured the meeting that in fact a Central Permit System was being finalised for the Country, can we get clarity on this from the Ministers office? Again the whole issue around Concurrent Powers again rears its head, a mechanism needs to be found so that for Rhino there are clear cut procedures with accountability.

Conservation is just that, conservation, it cannot be a mish mash of welfare, some animal rights all overshadowed by mans needs, this thought that has become interwoven through the fabric of conservation, "if it stays it pays", has got to stop. Words and phrases that have become hackneyed like sustainability and sustainable use of resources, blur the issue of conservation, what goes on in any form of conservancy, whether the Kruger and every single lesser reserve in our country should be around conservation and that is to maintain wild animals in their wild state with the absolute minimum of interference, unfortunately we have interfered, with our fences, our development and our agriculture and so we have to be content with the word minimum. Sanparks and those that derive a living from conservation need to

tread carefully, when Sanparks looks at its budget and sources of revenue it needs to be far more circumspect than they currently are, in effect they belong to South Africa and when proposing plans they need to listen, they need to research but most of all they need to take South Africans particularly, into their confidence. Right now the issue of poaching has hurt the resource base of Sanparks so innovative ways need to be sought to supplement that loss, I have put forward a proposal that Tourism comes to the “party” by imposing a so called “Rhino Levy” on all International arriving passengers at all ACSA Airports, it is a sad fact that this has taken so long to be implemented, on the other hand Lanseria has embraced the idea and we are, together, working on rolling that particular proposal out in the very near future. The proposal by Sanparks to build some sort of a luxury hotel next the Kruger as a solution is I’m afraid against a whole number of principals of ordinary South Africans, this issue has little to do with conservation and a lot to do with some sort of enterprise to raise capital, this needs to be far more open and if necessary scrapped, should any other proposal be more efficient that will not require use of current resources.

Whatever sits on top of conservation, such as the sale of so called excess animals, hunting and tourism has to pay its way independently, sales need to be carefully managed, hunting needs to understand the opposition that it engenders and tourism needs to contribute more effectively, where there is a cross interest of any sort it has to be dealt with in terms of conservation, without conservation there cannot be any sale of excess animals, any hunting and tourism will disappear. Its not rocket science....

Security.

Since the advent of our cherished Democracy back in 1994 South Africa whilst enjoying our new found freedom has also had to endure the most horrendous increase in violent crime creating the so called “security industry”, if one drives through any of the leafy suburbs in any of our cities, high walls electric fencing, burglar alarms and security companies are the order of the day. That crime has now invaded the world of conservation and like the city based counterparts we have a new branch of the so called industry setting up shop out amongst the private farms and reserves where Rhino are found. At the workshop devoted to security here in Midrand two weeks ago General Mpepe epitomised how far apart reality and the security issue around poaching really is by displaying an arrogance and an intransigence that has become commonplace amongst our so called “official” security agencies, the police being the one organ of State that should be protecting farmers and their farms and other rhino owners. This is extremely worrying because like in the cities so called Anti Poaching Units (APU’s) are proliferating. What will happen to this so called “industry” when the poaching is brought under control, it is worrying because to survive these APU’s need poaching. A plan must be developed and put into place in conjunction with the Department of Defence and the Police to deal with the issue of protection going forward.

In February of this year the head of Anti Poaching in the Kruger expressed to some MP’s on a visit to the park, that, to quote, “we don’t own the night” I had

raised the issue of using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or UAV's earlier as part of a system that could, in real time indicate day and night where the animals were and any humans could be identified and placed, unfortunately it was discovered that that particular technology is no longer available here in South Africa, and so a number of options have been explored particularly after a meeting between myself and Dr. Bandile Mkhize of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was held, where he expressed his concern for the inability of being able to get to the poachers before they got to any Rhinos. At the first meeting on the 13th of July I was able to bring Dr. Nir Tenenbaum of the firm Wildeas from Israel. This company utilises the most sophisticated tried and tested technology available in the world to assist in surveillance of wildlife. I can through this submission announce that I have entered into an agreement with Wildeas and the first surveillance system will arrive in South Africa shortly and will be made available to assist with this particular issue at no charge to the State thus assisting at a real and practical level in the fight to stop poaching, hopefully this will be the first of many.

The security of our Rhino needs to be taken very seriously and there is simply no question that the Army needs to be deployed both in and out of State Reserves and Farms to prevent poachers from getting to our rhino. In my submission in Parliament in January, I called for Flightplans having to be filed for any flight undertaken under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) this I am pleased to say has come to pass, we still however need to register each and every farm or conservancy with the SACAA and have a Notice to Airman (Notam) issued that will make reporting of such flights over these farms and reserves obligatory and reportable to the conservation authorities on filing of such plans and the compliance by the pilot in terms of the provisions of the Protected Areas Act (Act 15 of 2009) be assured. The transport of any aircraft whether ZU or ZS, but most particularly Rotorcraft by road on a trailer must be subject to an application and subsequent grant of a specific permit by a magistrate and once granted such permit to be copied to the relevant conservation authority as well as law enforcement for checking and compliance.

Since the so called Rhino Hearings held at Parliament in January the cooperation between the various prosecutorial agencies has improved markedly, something that is commendable and should be applauded, however there is always room for improvement and these agencies need to be ever more vigilant. Rumours abound regarding private stockpiles of Horn and despite regulation they still persist, given the stiff treatment currently being meted out by the courts across South Africa these past months particularly with regard to possession, Private Rhino owners need to declare any horns in their possession and to comply with any and all regulation they have to be aware of their obligations under the law and should they be found wanting the measures shown to suspected and guilty poachers be no different for themselves.

An issue that seemed to become the proverbial elephant in the room needs some careful thought and planning. Along the boundaries of a number of reserves particularly the Kruger and Hluhluwe there are communities that have traditionally been excluded from these issues, some APU's in clear

terms commented that these communities will not assist and others, it seemed, grudgingly accepted that there is in fact a role to play by these communities. The fact is that no matter what, these communities are part of our country and are made up of South Africans there is no them and us, as such they have a significant role to play and should they be properly included they certainly will, there is a massive opportunity for job creation and education and the significance of these communities in the fight against poaching can never be underestimated, in my view these communities must be targeted for training and integration into the greater plan to fight poaching as a priority.

The security inside Kruger needs to be looked at, almost daily on the social media sites, posts are made about lax security at this or other gate, about vehicles speeding but most of all about the number of vehicles on the roads at night. There was a time when it just was not allowed, to get permission to do so was a major undertaking. The idea of not declaring a weapon at the gate and not having it sealed on entry was in those times abhorrent. I have recently been involved with the “boast” by a so called professional hunter who smuggled a hunting rifle through Orpen Gate and have been told of many other instances of serious security lapses, this needs to be addressed as a priority.

This Rhino scourge involves the almost daily incursion across our borders and has taken on the proportions of a low intensity guerrilla war, yet we have our Army deployed across Africa undertaking so called Peace Keeping missions, this is wrong, before we look after any other country we need to look after what is ours, our so called peace keepers need to be brought back and must be deployed in the Kruger on a 24 hour basis, they should not leave until the herd has been secured for at least eighteen months and then their withdrawal should be gradual, replaced by trained rangers and a proper effective border control, we as South Africans have a right to ask this and our Government have an obligation to accede to this request they are after all put into their positions by a popular vote.

Trade.

Frederic Bastiat a French commentator from the 19th Century said: “When plunder becomes a way of life for a group of men in society, they create for themselves, in the course of time, a legal system that authorises it and a [moral] code that glorifies it”.

We need to be very careful as we deal with this the most contentious issue of these workshops, In Durban during my submission on Trade I stated clearly that the very people who are calling for trade need to step up and take responsibility for what it is that they have created. It is a simplistic view to state that by supplying the (black) market with so called legal horn it will follow that prices will drop and the illicit dealers who currently run this (black) market will suddenly legitimise themselves and make far less money. It is even more naïve to make a statement that we will be able to disrupt the market by supplying so called Legal Horn.

We are as a result of “being caught unawares” (David Mabunda’s words not mine) have now as a reality, an illicit trade in Rhino Horn run by criminal gangs whose stock in trade and modus operandi is deceit and dishonesty, to entertain any notion of convincing such people otherwise is naïve in the extreme. The idea that we could set up a similar organisation such as the Central Selling Organisation or CSO as run by De Beers in the diamond industry is with respect, ridiculous, that would presuppose that we have all of the available horn under control and secure, we have already lost 319 Rhinos (officially) as I write this, so to entertain such a notion would require the security of the herd, which would take 18 months, then we would have to test the efficacy of the intervention another 18 months so we’re at three years. Of course Mr. Hume and his colleagues would jump in and say, but we have horn in the interim, how convenient, and what would the result of that be, well, the syndicates would never allow this and unless Mr. Hume and his colleagues are in bed with them already we have a serious potential for conflict amongst thieves and its not difficult to understand that the only things that will suffer will be the rhino as they get caught up in this battle to maintain this illicit market.

If it is decided that horn will be allowed to be traded, what sort of precedent will be set, and what’s next? Abalone to drugs and then it’s not a large leap to human trafficking and prostitution!

The three year period alluded to above is a practical indication that we are faced with a two phased problem, before any idea of trade or not, we first need to secure the herd and we need to continue with the super successful conservation already practiced with the traditional “products” forming the basis of Rhino proliferation i.e. Tourism, Hunting, under strict conditions and Animal Sales. Which raises the issue of what went before? For years and years dagger handles were supplied from a so called legal supply, Traditional medicine was catered for from a so called legal supply and yet during all of this time there was no outcry, no attacks on people because they had differing views. I at the last Workshop and all anti traders, was accused by the Chair of the Private Rhino Owners Association of “aiding and abetting” poaching, indicating just how bankrupt the argument put forward by the pro-traders is, I cannot take this too seriously as research released in the last two weeks (S. Scholtz) questions whether or not this particular assumption is supported by the majority of Private Rhino Owners, merely highlighting the point of desperation that they now have reached. South Africans cannot be held responsible for decisions made by men around where they wish to invest their money, what we can do now is find ways to create opportunities, to over time, create a conducive climate for a reasonable return to be made from that “investment”. There are horns available in official stockpiles, as a compromise there is an argument that would find traction that these could be made available at levels that never exceeds supply numbers prior to the scourge, that discussion and decision however can only be made once the herd is safe and secure. The notion as espoused by the above mentioned chair of the PROA that because he and his colleagues have “invested” in their Rhino, that they should enjoy a status higher than myself is nonsense, all that they can

ever be is equal at a discussion about what at the end of the day is the future of our Iconic Rhino.

The arguments put forward that we can influence what occurs on the other side of the world by attempting to manipulate a market that at best we have little knowledge is ridiculous all we can in fact do is control whatever supply emanates from South Africa, unfortunately we cannot assist other countries until we have resolved our own issues.

There is an old saying violence begets violence using licence I would say that Trade begets yet more trade, we are not dealing with honest people and would be naïve in the extreme to begin to think we could persuade such people to become at our behest, honest. Lawrence Anthony said that once they're finished with the Rhinos up in Central Africa they'll just come and take the rest, he, I'm afraid was right, we need to engender the will to protect what is ours and to prevent their exploitation but most of all to take responsibility for what is happening. We as South Africans must never allow trade.

To close I'd like to quote two US politicians who were commenting on issues around Climate Change on Tuesday this last week, an issue as yet hardly dealt with here in South Africa, first Bill Clinton said "Every place people do things, the power of example changes consciousness". We need to realise that we need to do something, and by doing that we will have an effect that will last, Senator Harry Reid, also talking about Climate Change said "We must act now", how right he is, we do need to act now each day we are assailed by still more deaths of our precious Rhino and each day we are all affected by these losses, we have to act now and we have to stop this Holocaust visiting our Rhino.