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South Africa and Mozambique sign memorandum of understanding in the field of biodiversity, conservation and management

The South African Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Mrs B E E Molewa, and the Mozambican Minister of Tourism, Mr Carvalho Muária, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the field of Biodiversity Conservation and Management at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park on 17 April 2014.

Mozambique is regarded as a priority country for South Africa within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and South Africa recognises the need for engaging with Mozambique on wildlife management. This is particularly with respect to addressing the scourge of rhino poaching within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), as escalating incidences of poaching have become a major challenge within the GLTP to rhino populations.

A bilateral meeting took place on 14 June 2013 in Maputo, Mozambique, between Minister Molewa and Minister Muária during which the requirement of a government-to-government MOU on cooperation in the field of biodiversity, conservation and management was acknowledged.

Mozambique is a key strategic partner for South Africa within the SADC region. It is within this context that South Africa recognised the need for engaging with Mozambique on wildlife management. This is particularly with respect to addressing the scourge of rhino poaching within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP). Escalating incidences of poaching have become a major challenge within the GLTP, both to rhino and elephant populations

The signing of the treaty on the establishment, development and management of

the GLTP by the Heads of State of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe in 2002 signified the maturity of the relationship between the three countries. It culminated in a number of successes that included the creation of Giriyondo tourist access facility, the translocation of more than 5 000 animals to the Limpopo National Park and facilitating the natural migration numerous species, as well as an overall enhancement of the relationship between the three countries.

Minister Edna Molewa said at the signing of the MoU that the underlying reasons for the poaching are diverse and include trade and market dynamics, legislative and administrative gaps as well as organized crime and investigation challenges.

“It has also been recognised that to address the escalating trend in poaching, there are other socio-economic issues that require attention,” said the Minister.

The South African government has been actively involved on various levels, locally and internationally, to fight the ongoing poaching scourge. Since 2008 a holistic, integrated and multidimensional response, involving all relevant government departments, including conservation authorities, enforcement and intelligence agencies, customs, the prosecuting authorities and other national, regional and international organisations and stakeholders, to address increased rhino crimes and enhance protection of the species has been implemented.

Initiatives to address rhino poaching have included not only increasing the number of rangers protecting our wildlife, but also improving regional and international collabora-

tion with range and consumer states, as well as introducing legislation and policy measures to support the tasks of those working to ensure rhino and other wildlife threatened by poachers and crime syndicates are protected and will not become extinct.

The Department of Environmental Affairs was authorised by Cabinet to explore a model for trade in rhino horn.

The Panel of Experts to assist the Inter-Ministerial Committee appointed by Cabinet to deliberate on the matters relating to a possible trade in rhino horn commenced its work this month with the first meeting that took place on 9 April 2014. The 10 member Panel is chaired by Mr Fundisile Mketeni, the Deputy Director-General: Biodiversity and Conservation and will report to the Inter-Ministerial Committee before the end of the year.

Good progress has been made in the implementation of a Draft Cooperation Agreement on the Joint Protection and Management of the Rhino and Elephant Population in the Great Limpopo Park and Conservation Area, which was endorsed as an implementation strategy to combat wildlife crime at the bilateral meeting held between Ministers Molewa and Muária in Maputo, Mozambique on 14 June 2013.

The Draft Cooperation Agreement has resulted in increased joint collaboration efforts on rhino anti-poaching interventions on park management level.

The development of a Joint Operations Cross Border Protocol by the park managements will, once approved by the safety and



Mr Carvalho Muária, the Mozambican Minister of Tourism and Mrs Edna Molewa, the South African Minister of Environmental Affairs shake hands on the MoU, with the directors-general of the two countries and Mr Werner Myburgh, CEO of Peace Parks Foundation, looking on

security clusters of the two countries, provide for joint cross-border operations.

Additional steps being taken by South Africa and Mozambique following the bilateral in June 2013, have included:

- * Immediate maintenance and erection of fencing along the eastern boundary of Kruger National Park with Mozambique;
- * Strengthening of the buffer zone in Mozambique through the establishment of the Greater Lubombo Conservancy;
- * Creation of an intensive protection zone in the Limpopo National Park;
- * Deploying a well-trained and armed anti-poaching unit for joint collaboration with the Kruger National Park team; and the
- * Synchronisation of operational plans between the Limpopo and Kruger National Parks.

South Africa has committed R24.9 million from the R252 million Swedish and Dutch Postcode Lottery donation secured by the Peace Parks Foundation to Mozambique to assist with anti-poaching efforts.

This will assist with the implementation of counter-trafficking measures, the improvement of communication networks, the training and capacity building of field rangers, the provision of vital operational equipment, the deployment of sniffer dogs and community awareness projects.

Management teams from the two parks are finalizing the detailed project plans.

Minister Molewa welcomed the enactment of the Conservation Areas Act by the Parliament of the Government of Mozambique on 9 April 2014.

"The enactment of the Conservation Areas Act is a sign of the commitment of Mozambique to fighting the scourge of wildlife crime presently plaguing our countries," said Minister Molewa.

The new Act further commits Mozambique to its international biodiversity conservation obligations and recognises transfrontier conservation areas as one of its national conservation area categories. It provides for significant sentences for wildlife crime related activities, including rhino poaching.

Since the start of 2014, 294 rhino have been poached in South Africa and 93 poachers arrested. The Kruger National Park (KNP) continues to bear the brunt of rhino poaching with 185 rhino killed for their horns since January 1, 2014. A total of 34 rhino have been poached in Limpopo, 26 in North West and 25 in KwaZulu-Natal.

The signing of the MOU with Mozambique is within the context of the strengthening of relations between the two countries to enhance the protection of endangered species, such as the rhino, while working towards a common and coordinated management approach for the GLTP.

In terms of the MoU, the main areas of cooperation are:

1. Biodiversity management, conservation and protection;
2. Promotion of biodiversity sustainable use as an integral part of conservation of species and ecosystems;
3. Compliance with CITES and other relevant internationally, regional and sub-regional binding Conventions and Protocols;
4. Biodiversity law enforcement;
5. Compliance with domestic frameworks and applicable regional and sub-regional conventions and protocols;
6. Strengthen the cooperation on the above through exchange of information, intelligence, best practice and research;
7. Joint technology innovation, development and enhancement;
8. Wildlife trade, protected areas management, community development through biodiversity economy, and sustainable livelihoods;
9. Education, awareness and capacity building in biodiversity management, conservation, protection and law enforcement
10. Other areas related to the objective referred to in Article 1 as agreed upon by the Parties.

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Further steps for rhino from the €15.4 million Dutch and Swedish postcode lotteries grant



On 5 February the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Minister Edna Molewa lauded the €14.4 million grant by the Dutch Postcode Lottery and the €1 million by the Swedish Postcode Lottery, both to Peace Parks Foundation, which brought the total to €15.4 to combat wildlife crime.

Since this announcement, the South African government and its public entities, South African National Parks (SANParks) and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (Ezemvelo), have been working closely with Peace Parks Foundation to plan detailed projects. The partners have also established the necessary governance structures under the auspices of the Department of Environmental Affairs that will oversee the implementation of the multi-pronged programme to combat rhino poaching in South Africa, home to 83% of Africa's wild rhino.

The programme will encompass the protection of rhino populations; the implementation of counter-trafficking measures; the use of technology such as microchips, tracking devices and improved field communications to augment existing anti-poaching activities; community awareness projects; an extensive international communications campaign to address the demand; and the devaluation

of rhino horn upon conclusion of scientific research.

On 31 March the first steering committee meeting between the Department of Environmental Affairs, Ezemvelo, SANParks and Peace Parks Foundation was held to discuss implementation of the programme. During this meeting the first actions were sanctioned by the chairman of the steering committee, Mr Fundisile Mketeni, Deputy Director-General Department of Environmental Affairs.

As one of the first measures to be undertaken, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Peace Parks Foundation on 9 April signed an agreement that will initiate the implementation of projects, valued at R26.8 million, in KwaZulu-Natal to enhance existing rhino management and protection activities by Ezemvelo. The interventions comprised in this 3-year plan include the devaluation of rhino horn, training and capacity building of field rangers, the provision of vital operational equipment and the establishment of secure communication networks in the priority rhino reserves. Wildlife veterinary surgeons will also be supported with the necessary resources to enable them to treat the rhino that survive the brutal attacks by poachers, while rhino orphans will be taken into care.

About these steps Mr Fundisile Mketeni said: "Given the magnitude of the illegal wildlife trade, it is now all hands on deck to protect our rhino. This programme is a national effort by the Department of Environmental Affairs, SANParks, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Peace Parks Foundation, who are working together to ensure success."



Dr Bandile Mkhize, CEO of Ezemvelo, welcomed the development, saying: "The devaluation of rhino horn pilot project in selected reserves in 2013 proved to be very successful. We look forward to implementing all these projects. Working with the communities and other relevant partners, we will save our rhino for future generations to enjoy."

Werner Myburgh, CEO of Peace Parks Foundation said: "We are very pleased to see the implementation of the lottery grant get off the ground. The detailed plans and structures now in place are sure to have an effect on the wildlife crime that is decimating rhino."

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