



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

Press Release

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Editors and Journalists

COMMEMORATION OF WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2024

On the 3rd of March every year the world unites in recognizing and appreciate the role wildlife species play in people's lives, in an event we have come to know as World Wildlife Day. The commemoration of World Wildlife Day provides us with an opportunity to create awareness and education among ourselves on the significance of wildlife, both animals and plant species. In recent years, commemorations of this day have been overshadowed by human activities that threatens the wellbeing of the world's wildlife. Biodiversity and habitat loss resulting from human activities coupled with climate change have become is a global concern. Instead of focusing on appreciating wildlife, these commemorations have shifted their focus to advocate for the protection of our wildlife species.

Therefore, it is for this reason that in commemoration of World Wildlife Day, the Ministry wishes to remind the Namibian People of the threat facing our wildlife. We also want to implore upon all our patriotic citizens to be mindful of our activities and their short to long terms effects.

With the need to grow our economies, forests and woodlands are disappearing at a rapid rate to give way to development projects. These forests and woodlands are home to wildlife species some of which are rare and endangered. We are also experiencing an increase in industrial activities emitting greenhouse gasses that contribute further to the destruction of the ozone layer leading to climate change. Climate change on the other hand has detrimental impact on our livelihoods and causes biodiversity loss. In the case of Namibia, due to its vulnerability, any climatic changes will have severe implications in the forms of recurring droughts, floods, rising temperature and unreliable rainfall patterns. All of these factors result in wildlife mortalities and vegetation loss inhibiting us to achieve our constitutional mandate that provides for the utilization of natural resources sustainably to benefit the current and future generations of the country.

Another huge challenge to our wildlife is poaching, particularly that of high valued species such as rhinos, elephants and pangolins. Recently, we have also noted a growing trend in plant poaching in the country. Unprecedented levels of poaching are robbing us of much valued resources. Our high valued species are globally

categorized as critically endangered and at the rate at which poaching is taking place, we run a risk of having these magnificent wildlife species extinct. Namibians are therefore called upon to unite and act against wildlife crimes to ensure our wildlife resources are utilized to benefit us all and generations to come.

Namibia still has a healthy population of wildlife species and our conservation is reputable at a global level. However, the recent poaching statistics are concerning with the country losing a total of 631 rhinos in the last 10 years. We have recorded 97 rhinos poached in 2015, 66 in 2016, 55 in 2017, 84 in 2018, 61 in 2019, 48 in 2020, 53 in 2021, 92 in 2022, 67 in 2023 and 8 in 2024 to date. Namibia has also recorded 10 elephants poached in 2021, 4 in 2022, 8 in 2023 and so far, (zero)0 in 2024.

As indicated by the statistics, poaching continues unabated despite our efforts to reduce it to the lowest levels possible. It is a well-known fact that there is no demand for ivory, horns and pangolin scales in Namibia, the market is elsewhere in Asia, however Namibians are lured into participating in these crimes for smaller financial incentives. This in our view speak to the severity of poverty levels which makes our people vulnerable and become easy targets for wildlife crime kingpins.

Despite the worrisome figures of poaching, we are happy to note that law enforcement and intelligence continues to be effective in arresting wildlife crime suspects. In 2023 the country has registered a total of 50 cases related to rhino and elephant poaching in which 139 suspects were arrested. Law enforcement agencies has also seized 16 fire arms and impounded 14 vehicles from the suspects. This should send a clear message that those that chose to get involved in these crimes will be caught and made to face the full wrath of the Namibian law. The collaboration we have with civil society, private sector and security forces such as the Namibian Police, the Namibian Defense Force, Central Intelligence is commendable.

It must be understood that the wildlife resources that we are protecting should provide local communities with avenues for income generation and employment creation through tourism enterprising. We have also identified that there may be an information vacuum in regards to the legality, implications and impact of poaching in the country. In this regard, moving forward we will priorities awareness and education activities across the country, particularly in hotspot areas. Furthermore, there is a need for stakeholders in the sector to consider developing a rewards scheme for informers in order to counter offers made to Namibians to undertake illegal activities.

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