

Vietnam urged to redouble rhino trade fight

March 12 2013



A white rhinoceros is seen walking inside its cage at the Saigon Zoological and Botanical Garden in Ho Chi Minh City, on December 6, 2007. Vietnam was on Tuesday urged to do more to fight the illegal trade in rhino horn, which is highly prized in the Southeast Asian nation for its supposed medicinal qualities.

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The 178-member Convention on International [Trade](#) in Endangered Species (CITES), meeting for a major wildlife conference in Bangkok, appealed for greater global efforts to prosecute [traffickers](#) and curb rising demand in Asia.

They called on Vietnam in particular to redouble its efforts, along with Mozambique which was urged to prioritise legislation to prevent rhino poaching and [illegal trade](#)—a move welcomed by campaigners.

"It's encouraging to see attention focused where it is needed most and CITES nations collectively and loudly calling for tightening of trade controls and stricter penalties for [illegal activities](#)—but more must be done to save [rhinos](#) before it's too late," said Mark Jones of Humane Society International.

Some 668 rhinos were slaughtered in 2012, a grim record that on current trends will be surpassed this year.

Hanoi was asked to develop a secure registration database to track legal rhino horn trophies, and to draw up strategies to reduce demand in a country where rhino horn is sold as a cure for cancer and even hangovers.

Vietnam and Mozambique were both asked to report back on their progress by January 2014, notably with regards to arrests, seizures and [prosecutions](#).

Carlos Drews, head of WWF's delegation at the Cites meeting, described the countries as "two of the worst offenders in the rhino horn trade" and welcomed the timeline as a way of helping them "clean up their act".

"This is a big step forward for the protection of rhinos, a prehistoric animal that are being butchered for their horns at alarming rates to feed

demand primarily in Vietnam," he said in a statement.

A Vietnam representative at the meeting said Hanoi "will do our best" but called on fellow CITES member states to provide technical and financial support.

South Africa earlier warned the conference that its white rhino population would begin to decline by 2016 if the current rate of poaching continued, following the killing of scores of the creatures this year.

Rhinos have been registered since 1977 under Appendix I of CITES, banning the trade in their parts.

Horns from the legal trophy hunting of white rhinos in South Africa and neighbouring Swaziland are exempt—a move some conservationists say has saved the species by encouraging game reserves to maintain large populations.

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