

Hit by poachers, S. Africa to lobby for rhino horn sale

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A rhinoceros rest in the Kruger National Park near Nelspruit, South Africa, on February 6, 2013. South Africa said Wednesday it would lobby to relax a ban on international trade in rhino horn to allow a one-off sale of stockpiles to address a poaching bloodbath.

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Environment minister Edna Molewa said the country will submit a proposal "to introduce regulated international trade in rhino horn" at the next meeting of the [wildlife trade](#) regulator CITES in South Africa in 2016.

"South Africa cannot continue to be held hostage by the syndicates who are slaughtering our rhinos," she told reporters.

"We do have the ability to make this scarce resource somewhat available without impacting on the species, through the implementation of a regulated trade system."

South Africa is home to about three quarters of the world's rhino population. Poaching [gangs](#) target the horns which fetch thousands of dollars on the Asian black market where they are believed to have medicinal properties.

Worldwide horn trade has been banned for 36 years but, by June 26, [poachers](#) had killed 446 rhinos in South Africa this year. Last year 668 [rhinos](#) were slaughtered.

Fundisile Mketeni, deputy director general of biodiversity and conservation at the environment ministry, said the aim was to sell horns collected from natural fatalities.

"The one-off sale currently is the thinking, that we need to go and clear the stock that we have," he said.

"But moving forward, there might be other models," he added.

Rhinos have been registered since 1977 under Appendix I of CITES, banning the trade in their parts. South Africa and Swaziland's [white rhinos](#) are listed as Appendix II, allowing trophy hunting and sales of live

animals.

The one-off sale model is envisaged along the lines of four CITES-approved auctions of [elephant ivory](#)—from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe—in 2008 to accredited traders from China and Japan.

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