

To alter the existing annotation on the Appendix II listing of Swaziland's White Rhino, adopted at the 13th Conference of Parties in 2004, so as to permit a limited and regulated trade in White Rhino horn which has been collected in the past from natural deaths, or recovered from poached Swazi rhino, as well as horn to be harvested in a non-lethal way from a limited number of White Rhino in the future in Swaziland

Proponent: Swaziland

Summary: The Southern White Rhino *Ceratotherium simum simum* is one of two subspecies of White Rhino, the other being the Northern White Rhino *C. s. cottoni*, now believed extinct in the wild.

The Southern White Rhino currently numbers just over 20,000 wild individuals, having increased from 20 to 50 in 1895. Over 90% of the population is in South Africa. There are reintroduced populations in Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Uganda and Zimbabwe and an introduced population in Zambia. There are ca. 700 individuals in captivity around the world. The subspecies was classified in the IUCN Red List as Near Threatened (2011). Until recently the population was growing (averaging 7% growth per year for 1992 to 2010)¹. However due to escalating poaching since 2008 the global population has levelled off. At a continental level reported poaching declined slightly in 2015¹.

Having become extinct in Swaziland in the mid-20th century, the White Rhino was reintroduced from South Africa in 1965. The population in Swaziland reached a peak of around 120 in the late 1980s but was reduced by poaching to 24 in 1992. Improved protection led to population recovery. In 2015 the population stood at 90 individuals, representing an average of 6% annual growth since 1992. Drought-induced mortality has recently reduced this number to 73 (as of April 2016). Losses due to poaching have been negligible to date, comprising two individuals in 2011 and one in 2014. The population is confined to secure areas totalling 10,000ha in two protected areas (Hlane and Mkhaya Game Reserves) in the eastern part of the country.

The entire rhinoceros family, the Rhinocerotidae, was included in Appendix I of CITES in 1977. The South African population of Southern White Rhino was transferred to Appendix II in 1994 under the following annotation: "For the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations and hunting trophies. All other specimens shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix I and the trade in them shall be regulated accordingly." In 2004, Swaziland's population was transferred to Appendix II under the same annotation. At that time the population there numbered 60 individuals.

There has been very limited trade of Southern White Rhinos between Swaziland and South Africa since 2005, almost all in live individuals with some scientific specimens. As well as exporting live individuals, Swaziland has imported some to enhance the genetic diversity of its rhino population.

This proposal is to alter the existing annotation as it applies to Swaziland's population, so as to permit a limited and regulated trade in White Rhino horn which has been collected in the past from natural deaths, or recovered from poached Swazi rhino, as well as horn to be harvested in a non-lethal way from a limited number of individuals in the future in Swaziland.

According to the Supporting Statement, Swaziland wishes to sell existing stocks of some 330kg to a small number of licensed retailers and to sell harvested horn, sourced from sustainable, non-lethal harvesting, at the rate of 20kg per year, to those retailers. Funds raised would be used to contribute to conservation of the White Rhino in Swaziland and maintenance of the protected areas where the species occurs there. Big Game Parks, the CITES Management Authority for Swaziland, would be the sole seller and buyers would be licensed and approved by CITES. The proponent states that the DNA profiles of all horn offered for sale would be recorded in a national register and made available to TRAFFIC. The trading operation would be open to inspection by the CITES Secretariat. It would be stopped if it were judged to be having a negative impact on the population of the species in Swaziland.

Analysis: The Swaziland population of Southern White Rhino was transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II in 2004 under an annotation that can be interpreted as satisfying the precautionary safeguard set out in sub-paragraph A 2 a) iii) of Annex 4 of *Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16)*, in that it is a special measure approved by the CoP, based on management measures described in the Supporting Statement. This sub-paragraph also states that effective enforcement controls should be in place. In approving the transfer, CoP13 agreed

that this was the case.

The current proposal is to maintain the population in Appendix II under a different annotation which may also be considered a special measure under the same part of Annex 4 of *Res. Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP16)*.

It appears that the management measures currently in place (i.e. since the transfer of the population to Appendix II in 2004) are satisfactory as the population has increased overall in that time, despite a recent drought-induced decline; the very small amount of poaching recorded indicates that effective enforcement controls are in place as regards protection of living animals.

Export of stockpiled horn would have no direct impact on the living population of Southern White Rhinoceros in Swaziland. Other than indicating that it will be non-lethal, the Supporting Statement does not provide details as to how horn would be collected from living individuals. Routine temporary immobilisation for dehorning is a standardised procedure in some South African White Rhino populations with no clear adverse effects on the population or their breeding performance¹.

Swaziland gives estimated average weights of horn per individual as 7.02kg, this presumably being derived from weights of horns in the current stockpile. This figure is slightly higher than an average of 5.8kg from a large sample. Swaziland proposes to harvest 20kg of horn per year, indicating an average annual offtake of 1kg per animal. This has been demonstrated to be sustainable production for male White Rhinos but a figure closer to 0.6kg is more realistic for females. Given existing numbers and expected age and sex structure of the population, sustainable harvest of 20kg per year should be achievable. Research of stress levels currently shows little impact of regular dehorning every 18 months in a South African White Rhino population that is breeding well¹.

Few details are provided as to how the proposed trade will be carried out and controlled; for example there is no indication of how appropriate purchasers would be selected and how and by whom these would be licensed. It is not clear exactly what role either TRAFFIC or the CITES Secretariat would be expected to play in oversight of any trade. Much of the detail needed to assess these aspects of the precautionary measures implied by the proposal is therefore not provided.

Reviewers: R. Emslie.

References:

Information not referenced in the Summary section is from the Supporting Statement.

¹ Emslie, R. (2016) *In litt.* to IUCN/TRAFFIC Analyses Team. Cambridge, UK.