

## SANParks defends Transfrontier Park agreement

South African National Parks (SANParks) is refuting several [media reports](#) that suggest that the part of the fence that was dropped between the Kruger National Park and Limpopo National Park as part of the [Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park](#) agreement is to blame for the shooting of wildlife.



Image Source: [Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park](#)

The statement cannot be true for a number of reasons; some amongst others is the fact that there is no fence that can prevent thieves from doing their dirty work if they are determined to do so; and again the area where the fence was dropped over ten years ago, an area of about 40km north of Shingwedzi, is not where the park has suffered the highest number of rhino poaching incidents since the scourge began in 2008. The fact is that the highest number of rhino poached is in the southern part of the park where the fence is still intact. It is equally important to note that the fence that was removed in 2010 also had no security features and it was a simple five-foot high cable fence.

“SANParks is fully committed to the Peace Parks concept and, thus, a committed member of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park which comprises of the Kruger National Park in South Africa, Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe, and Limpopo National Park in Mozambique,” said William Mabasa the acting head of communications in SANParks.

### Bigger space for wildlife

“On 9 December 2002, the heads of state of Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe signed an international treaty at Xai Xai in Mozambique to establish the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park which we are all committed to making sure reaches full realisation which is to afford our wildlife a bigger space on which to roam and provide economic benefits to the three countries involved,” said Mabasa.

The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) is truly the jewel among the various southern African TFCAs currently being developed, continued Mabasa. “In 2006, the Goriyondo tourist access facility between the Limpopo and Kruger National Parks was opened. Almost 5,000 heads of game have been translocated from Kruger to Limpopo National Park. This, combined with 40km of fencing being dropped, has encouraged more animals, including over 1,000 elephants and over 1,000 buffalo, to cross the border of their own accord.”

### A spill over of the wildlife crime wave

“A fence will never keep thieves out of any area. The dropped fence is not the reason for the increased poaching in South Africa. Poaching is also not a uniquely South African problem, it is a continental, if not a worldwide, problem which needs global approach to win. Sub-Saharan Africa is losing 30,000 elephants to wildlife crime every year and what we are experiencing now is a spill over of this crime wave into South Africa” said Mabasa.

As long as the demand for illegal ivory and rhino horn exists and escalates, interventions at the ground level cannot solve the problem. A multi-pronged approach addressing the entire illicit trafficking chain is the only feasible way to address organised

wildlife crime. By simplifying it and putting blame on the removal of a 40km cable fence line out of the total border area of Kruger of over 400km, does not do justice to the complexity and seriousness of the challenges being faced.

## **Benefits of the peace parks initiative**

It is further of importance to note, that as a result of the peace parks initiative, over R640 million is being made available for developing the Mozambique component of the Transfrontier Park until 2022. Amongst others, the funding includes support for infrastructure development, socio-economic development (which constitutes a rural development and resettlement programme to move close to 8,000 people away from the core Transfrontier Park to areas more suitable for sustainable livelihoods) as well as park management and anti-poaching operations. Without the existence of the Transfrontier Park, investments at this scale and level would simply not have been possible.

“Kruger National Park officials are working together with Limpopo National Park on a continuous basis and have together in the past achieved a lot of successes in their collaboration in a number of strategic anti-poaching interventions, including improved cross-border collaboration and operations, joint training initiatives and the development of a joint communication system. SANParks is committed to conservation and building relations with its neighbours,” concluded Mabasa.

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