

Committee of Inquiry to investigate trade in rhino horn

The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, has announced the introduction of a Committee of Inquiry tasked with investigating the feasibility of trade in rhino horn.



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On 22 January 2014 Molewa announced that once pre-screening and vetting by the State Security Agency (SSA) was completed, the names would be released. The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) also invited stakeholders to register to participate in the work of the committee.

The Committee of Inquiry embarks on its work ahead of the 17th Conference of Parties (CoP17) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 2016.

In the coming months, the committee will consult with relevant stakeholders before submitting a set of recommendations to the inter-ministerial committee (IMC).

Technical committee

Due to the technical nature of the issues to be discussed by the Committee of Inquiry, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been established. The TAC, comprising the Directors-General of the Departments of the Ministries represented the IMC, will facilitate the processes and ensure that both technical and strategic matters are adequately addressed before reports and or recommendations are submitted to the IMC for consideration.

The IMC will meet as soon as the Committee of Inquiry and the TAC have finalised reports for its consideration.

It is important to emphasise that South Africa has not taken a position on the issue, and will not do so until the committee has completed its work and presented its findings. Any proposal will be based on sound research, taking into account the terms of the London declaration.

Vested interests

"As government we have not in the past and will not in future be swayed by anyone with vested interests in either outcome," says Molewa. She added that South Africa prescribed to sustainable utilisation principles, which in turn formed part of the integrated strategic management of rhinoceros.

The 21 member committee is chaired by Nana Magomola, and will report to the inter-ministerial committee before the end of 2015.

The committee comprises a cross-section of stakeholders from both the public and private sector: leaders in their field who have been selected based on extensive expertise. This includes representatives from law-enforcement agencies, SANParks, the scientific community, the immigration service, the revenue service, the conservation industry, private wildlife owners, community organisations as well as non-governmental organisations and traditional leadership.

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