



LONG AWAITED AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM BRINGS HOPE TO PLIGHT OF RHINO

11th December 2012

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The long-awaited Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Vietnam and South Africa was finally signed on the 10th of December 2012, by Minister Edna Molewa and Vietnam's Minister of Agriculture, Cao Duc Phat. The MOU allegedly encompasses agreements between South Africa and Vietnam on inter alia biodiversity conservation and co-operation on the trade of wildlife.

Said Rynette Coetzee, Project Executant of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Law and Policy Programme: "We were disappointed that no NGOs were allowed into the signing of the MOU but are excited that the South African and Vietnamese governments have taken this crucial step towards regulating wildlife trade. We look forward to reading the MOU and contributing to its success wherever we can."

"The EWT commends this move in the right direction but believe that the key to the MOU's effectiveness lies in a clear commitment and real desire, from both parties, to fully implement its provisions and make it work on the ground," commented Anique Rossouw, Manager of the EWT's Law and Policy Programme.

"Without having seen a copy of the MOU, we can only rely on the Department's statement, which lists the seven areas identified as priority areas for co-operation between Vietnam and South Africa. Although we fully support improved co-operation, we would also like to see a firm commitment, especially from Vietnam, in terms of prioritising and elevating wildlife crime to a priority crime and taking the appropriate enforcement action," continued Rossouw.

To date 618 rhinos have been poached in South Africa. Last year 488 rhinos had been poached by the end of December. There has also been a marked increase in the number of arrests for rhino related criminal activities. In November Thai citizen, Chumlong Lemtongtai, received a forty year sentence for the fraudulent use of rhino trophy hunting permits. At present this is the highest penalty awarded to an accused in a rhino related crime.

For further information and comment please contact Rynette Coetzee, Project Executant of the EWT's Law and Policy Programme, on rynettec@ewt.org.za

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