



“Working within CITES for the protection and conservation of species in international trade”

25 October 2010

CITES Management Authority, European Union Countries

Stricter Domestic Measures for Rhinoceros Horn Product Re-export

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rhinoceros Working Group of the Species Survival Network (SSN) regarding the United Kingdom’s new restrictions on the re-export of rhinoceros horn legally sold at auction in the UK.

The UK authorities were prompted to take this action after being alerted to significant increases in the volume and monetary value of products containing rhino horn being traded in auction houses, and subsequently re-exported. These largely consist of antique items considered “works of art”, and “personal and household effects” which include trophy horns. The increases in volume and individual value raised suspicions that these objects may be fuelling illegal markets in the Far East and may, by doing so, create further incentives for rhinoceros poaching.

As a result, Richard Benyon, the UK’s Parliamentary Undersecretary at the Department of the Environment, announced stricter domestic measures on 16th September 2010 to restrict re-exports of rhinoceros horn and rhinoceros horn products from the UK. Details can be found on the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/cites/strictermeasures.htm#3>

We welcome the UK’s initiative, which comes at a time when rhinoceros populations in both Asia and Africa are coming under increased pressure. Rhinoceros poaching has escalated alarmingly in recent months, particularly in South Africa. The killing and mutilation of rhinoceroses is reported on an almost daily basis. By the end of September this year, 210 rhino poaching incidents had been reported in South Africa, the same number as had been poached in the years 2006-2009 combined. Losses to poaching in Zimbabwe are reported to have exceeded 100 since 2008.

The five extant species of rhinoceros are all listed in the CITES Appendices. All are in Appendix I, except populations of the southern white rhinoceros subspecies in South Africa and Swaziland, which are listed in Appendix II.

However, rhinoceros horn is reported to fetch prices as high as US\$20,000/kg in parts of Asia. With vast profits to be made, poaching has become increasingly sophisticated and has included the use of helicopters and modern veterinary drugs.

We urge your government to take action against the abuse of trade exemptions by adopting measures equivalent to those introduced by the UK for any products containing rhino horn, and to ensure that any such products sold domestically in your country under any derogation are prohibited from being re-exported, so that all EU Member States can do their part to protect these ancient animals from the impacts of expanding markets for their horns in the Far East.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susie Watts', with a stylized, cursive script.

Susie Watts
Co-chair
SSN Rhino Working Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Jones', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Jones
Co-chair
SSN Rhino Working Group