

**IWMC Position paper on
Proposal 17.7 (Swaziland)
White rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*)**

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Swaziland has submitted a proposal to sell their horn stocks of 330 kg and also to sell, in the future, 20 kg annually from natural deaths (8 kg) and harvesting horn from about 4 of their 73 white rhino (12 kg). Harvesting will be done on a rotational basis. The horn re-grows.

The proceeds from the sale of the stocks will amount to \$9.9 million at a wholesale price of \$30,000 per kg. That amount will be placed in an investment fund to earn about \$600,000 p.a. The annual sale of 20 kg will also produce \$600,000, for total funding of \$1.2 million p.a.

Swaziland's law enforcement has been effective with only 3 rhino having been poached over the past 24 years. This low level of poaching is due to dedicated staff, severe sentences, a good and well rewarded information network and because the King champions wildlife conservation in Swaziland.

There is a risk that as law enforcement in South Africa becomes more intense, so will the risk of poaching in Swaziland increase. Mitigating that risk will need funding.

The King allows all income from wildlife to be retained by the parks.

The current cost of managing the three parks (Mlilwane, Hlane, and Mkhaya) is \$2 million p.a. which is generated from tourism, trading and unsolicited donations. These parks receive no government funding. Current funding is inadequate: vehicles are old and need to be replaced, fencing is in need of repair, rangers' salaries need to be increased and there needs to be sufficient funding to pay for supplementary feed in times of drought. Donor funding cannot be relied upon.

The purpose of CITES is to ensure that international (legal) trade in rhino does not threaten their survival but by extension, one assumes, CITES has the responsibility to approve trade if that would be to the advantage of rhino. The Swaziland proposal will test the sincerity of that purpose as there are other factors at play that have little to do with the welfare of rhino but are entrenched sentiments that are opposed to trade...sentiments that are not well supported by logic.

The main factor is that any horn trade will send a message to the market that suddenly all trade in horn is acceptable while the NGOs and others have, for years, been promoting a view that all

trade and use of horn is unacceptable and that demand reduction along with law enforcement is the solution to poaching.

Swaziland intends selling its horn to a small number of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) hospitals. Markets are astute and unlikely to accept false messages. They will understand the difference between the sale of legal horn and poached horn and that difference will be reinforced by publicity.

The 39 year old CITES ban on trade in horn has not been effective. The current trade out of Africa is all illegal and amounts to about 1,300 horns p.a. or 5,200 kg. If consumers use 5 grams for a course of treatment, then the total supply satisfies about 1 million people. There are about 1,000 million people in the Far East who use TCM and maybe half of those would buy horn if the price was low enough to be acceptable. For demand reduction to work all 500 million will need to be persuaded that either buying horn is immoral or they will need to be persuaded, after centuries of belief in it, that horn does not work. Persuading 499 million is not good enough. Relying on demand reduction would seem a futile and dangerous policy on which to risk thousands of rhino lives. Even if it were possible to eliminate demand it would take too long...longer than rhino can withstand the current onslaught.

The sale of Swaziland's stocks of 330 kg will amount to a once off 6% of the annual market and the on-going sales of 20 kg p.a. will amount to 0.4% of the total market.

Parties need to consider whether their votes are going to support the environment for rhino in Swaziland or the interests of the NGOs.

A possible concern may be that if the Swaziland proposal is approved it may encourage a proposal for legal trade from South Africa who will argue that at the current high price they can satisfy, sustainably, the entire market for horn without the need to kill one rhino. The Parties can consider South Africa's arguments (which may be compelling) if and when South Africa submits a trade proposal for consideration. It would seem wrong for a possible trade proposal in the future from South Africa to undermine Swaziland's current proposal.

The entire international trade in horn is currently in contravention of CITES rules and that illegal trade threatens the survival of rhino. Swaziland has chosen to follow the correct route and to ask for permission to sell a small amount of horn to finance their parks. If care for rhino is valued and ethical behaviour is valued and the fundamental purpose of CITES is valued, the Swaziland proposal would seem worthy of support.