



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Landmark court ruling paves the way for ethical rhino horn trade – offering lifeline to save the species

KIMBERLEY, NORTHERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

In a resounding victory for wildlife conservation, the Northern Cape High Court today dismissed, with costs, the government's application for leave to appeal an earlier ruling that orders the issuance of export permits for legally and ethically harvested rhino horn.

This historic decision validates the rights of private conservationists and breeding facilities to fund their critical, high-cost protection efforts through the legal international trade of ethically trimmed horns. It is a decision that experts believe could save the species, sustainably fund conservation, and uplift rural communities across South Africa.

A Victory for Science & Conservation

For decades, the scientific community and conservation giants like the late Dr. Ian Player have pleaded for a well-organized, legal international trade in rhino horn. The courts have now confirmed that this approach is both legal and consistent with the rules of the CITES convention and South African law.

This ruling closely aligns with recent governmental findings. In March of this year, Minister Aucamp published a report from South Africa's CITES Scientific Authority stating that the government's ongoing refusal to allow trade was creating an artificial monopoly that directly benefits poaching syndicates and encourages the slaughter of rhinos.

The report stated categorically:

"The ongoing prohibition on the trade in rhino horn has proven to be detrimental to the survival of the species", whereas "trade in horn from captive breeding operations is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on the wild population."





The Poaching Crisis & The Renewable Solution

Despite 50 years of CITES restrictions, Africa's rhinos have been decimated. South Africa's iconic Kruger National Park has lost more than 80% of its rhino population since 2010. While private reserves like Rockwood have successfully protected and grown their rhino populations, they have done so at a severe, unsustainable financial and personal cost.

A well-regulated trade offers a humane, sustainable alternative to black-market poaching based on simple biology:

- **A Renewable Resource:**
Rhino horn is made of keratin - the same dead tissue as human hair and nails - and grows constantly.
- **Zero Harm:**
Horns can be routinely and safely harvested from live rhinos without causing pain or injury.
- **Protection Through Trimming:**
Conservationists already trim horns to deter poachers and prevent injuries. Selling these existing stockpiles will provide desperately needed capital to fund security and habitat management.

With no legal source, consumers in the Far East, where horn is used in traditional medicine, are currently forced to rely on the black market, supplied by crime syndicates who violently hack horns from the faces of poached rhinos.

An Urgent Call to the New Minister

For years, the decision regarding the legal trade of rhino horn has been crippled by political paralysis. We now urge the newly appointed Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, David Maynier, to do the right thing. When all the world's leading experts in law and conservation agree that trade in ethically sourced horns is the path to saving the species, obstructing that trade is poor conservation strategy, morally indefensible, and, as the courts have confirmed, illegal.

We call on Minister Maynier to show courage and integrity, to honour the decision of the Northern Cape High Court, and to transfer control of this resource away from organized crime and back into the hands of the people who are actually protecting these animals.

This ruling is a bold step toward 21st-century conservation. It is time to celebrate this victory and continue fighting for a future where rhinos thrive and communities prosper.

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