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“Rhino horn is neither a magical medicine nor a status symbol”

Vietnamese delegates share their experiences from South Africa

Hanoi, September 20, 2013 – A Vietnamese National Assembly member, a well-known journalist, a movie star and a senior Environmental Police officer have returned to Hanoi after a ten-day working visit to South Africa, where they directly observed the impacts of the international illegal rhino horn trade.

The delegates came together today at a press conference in Hanoi to discuss and reflect on the issue. The delegation included Mr. Vo Tuan Nhan (National Assembly member and Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Science, Technology and Environment), Vice Chief of the Hanoi Environmental Police Mr. Nguyen Viet Tien, journalist Mr. Do Doan Hoang, and actor and comedian Mr. Nguyen Xuan Bac, along with representatives from the Vietnamese wildlife conservation organization, Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV).

During their time in South Africa – the world’s main source country for illegal rhino horn – the delegates visited Kruger National Park, where they directly witnessed the consequences of the increasingly destructive global trade.

“At Kruger National Park, we saw a terrible scene – a rhino that had been shot dead for its horn only one week earlier,” said National Assembly Member Vo Tuan Nhan. “Our South African friends told us that 635 rhinos had been killed there since January, and nearly two-thirds of these were killed inside Kruger.”

The increasing demand for rhino horn is a major threat to South African rhinos. Vietnam is considered the world’s second largest market for rhino horn, where many people still falsely believe in its healing properties as a traditional medicine and consider it a status symbol.

“We visited the carcass of a dead rhino, and all that remained was skin and bone – the horn had already been taken by poachers,” recalled actor Mr. Nguyen Xuan Bac, who today became ENV’s Rhino Ambassador. “People who consume rhino horn are being fooled and wasting their money. They must stop before it is too late for these amazing creatures.”

ENV partnered with the South African non-profit the Rhinose Foundation, which sponsored the ten-day trip to allow the influential Vietnamese delegates to witness the problem first-hand and bring their stories and experiences back home.

“Our fact-finding mission gave the delegates a glimpse of the severity of the problem in South Africa. For the rhinos to be saved, the demand from countries like Vietnam must end. We hope their experiences will make a difference here,” said Andrew Paterson, director of the Rhinose Foundation.



Actor and comedian Xuan Bac was named ENV Rhino Ambassador



Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung, Vice-Director of ENV, agreed the trip was a crucial opportunity to raise awareness among the Vietnamese people. "Our delegation has arrived home just in time for World Rhino Day, which is this Sunday, September 22. It is great to have so many prominent members of Vietnamese society on board to drive home the message that rhino horn is not a magical medicine or a status symbol.

ENV would like to thank the Rhinose Foundation and the Humane Society International for making this trip possible and supporting our delegates to travel to South Africa. We would also like to thank Save the Rhino International for its support of the event today.

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About Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV)

Education for Nature - Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on the conservation of nature and protection of the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about the need to protect nature and wildlife. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence public attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world. We work closely with government partners to strengthen policy and legislation and directly support enforcement efforts in the protection of endangered species of national, regional and global significance.

About ENV's Wildlife Crime Hotline

ENV maintains a [toll-free National Wildlife Crime Hotline](#) to facilitate reporting of crimes by the general public. Trained case officers from ENV receive calls and transfer information about wildlife crimes to appropriate local authorities. Each case is then documented and tracked through to conclusion. Members of the public are kept informed of the results of cases that they report to ENV.

So far, ENV has documented more than 5,200 wildlife crime cases resulting in confiscation of hundreds of animals, closure of wildlife markets and restaurants, removal of advertisements, and punishment to violators, as well as voluntary action by hundreds of violators after initial warnings were issued by ENV.