

## Press release

### South Africa visits Vietnam for biodiversity conservation, ahead of World Rhino Day

**Hanoi, September 22, 2014** – World Rhino Day, an annual celebration held on September 22 to recognize all five species of rhino. The day was created in 2011, to draw global attention to the rhino poaching crisis in South Africa, which is linked to the rise in demand for illegal consumption of rhino horn in a number of Asian countries, including Vietnam.

A delegation of South African officials concluded their mission to Vietnam ahead of today's World Rhino Day, which included a roundtable meeting and discussions about biodiversity and wildlife conservation between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Vietnam and the Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Water of South Africa.

The roundtable, hosted by Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), was held on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September to specifically discuss the current status, protection efforts, and challenges in the management of biodiversity and wildlife resources in Vietnam.



Photo: Prof. Dang Huy Huynh propounded at the roundtable

The roundtable event helped to provide South Africa with a useful insight into biodiversity management issues in Vietnam, in particular, the elements influencing illegal wildlife consumption and trade in the country; while further deepening cooperation efforts between Vietnam and South Africa under the Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed in December 2012. Discussions concluded with an agreement to implement the action plan associated with the MoU, and to support Vietnam implement its international obligations. The roundtable provided a useful opportunity for both delegations to more broadly learn about each other's initiatives related to biodiversity management, and to create a deeper understanding about how they are respectively addressing illegal wildlife hunting and trade.

The mission was a follow-up visit to MONRE's study tour to South Africa in March earlier this year, within the framework of the project "Wildlife consumption in Vietnam: Reforming policies and practices to strengthen biodiversity conservation" (WLC Project), funded by the Global Environment Facility through the World Bank.

*"Strengthening collaboration efforts to combat the illegal trade and consumption of rhino horn was a central part of the mission's discussions, especially in terms of efforts to reduce demand, and control illegal smuggling and trade,"* said Dr. Nguyen The Dong, Vice Director General of the Vietnam Environment Administration, MONRE. *"It was a fruitful visit and exchange, which will translate to better outcomes for bilateral cooperation in biodiversity conservation in the future."*

In recognition of World Rhino Day, the Vietnam Environment Administration under MONRE also partnered with Freeland Foundation and Education for Nature-Vietnam to launch a new short video

clip to help raise awareness of the consequences of illegal rhino horn consumption. The video clip, sponsored by the USAID-funded Asia's Regional Response to Endangered Species Trafficking (ARREST) Program has been produced in English and Vietnamese, carries the message "**Stop Extinction: Don't buy, trade or consume rhino products**", and will be used in viral communication campaigns, and shared through social media networks.



*Photo: Posters at the Ministry of Public Security*

Also under ARREST, 800 posters and banners containing wildlife protection and anti-smuggling messages were printed by the Biodiversity Conservation Agency and widely distributed to ministries, national agencies, and organisations in Hanoi.



*Photo: Handing over border banners/posters in Dien Bien province*

The ARREST Program also helped to support the production of an additional series of posters and banners in Vietnamese and Lao languages for distribution to Dien Bien and Quang Tri provinces as part of two anti-smuggling training courses organised and funded by UNODC. Over 50 officers drawn from police, customs and border guards, working along the Vietnam-Lao border were trained. In coming training courses planned by UNODC, additional poster/ banner sets will be printed in Vietnamese and Chinese languages for distribution to Northern provinces of Vietnam along the border with China.

**To view the rhino video clip, links are as follows:**

- English version:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Hi\\_tc5ZWU&list=UU6IX1CI5bmbD6T-Mg9yfx5Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1Hi_tc5ZWU&list=UU6IX1CI5bmbD6T-Mg9yfx5Q)

- Vietnamese version:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdHMmKKStgQ&list=UU6IX1CI5bmbD6T-Mg9yfx5Q>

*For more information, please contact:*

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### **About Wildlife Consumption**

Vietnam is recognized globally for its unique biodiversity. It is home to many rare and endangered species, including some that are found nowhere else in the world.

However, illegal wildlife trade and consumption have become major problems in Vietnam. Despite efforts to manage the trade and conserve wildlife, rapid economic growth over the past two decades has contributed to an unsustainable increase in wildlife consumption. Illegal consumption and the associated trade have led to the alarming decline of wild populations of many mammal, bird, and reptile species.

Illegal and unsustainable wildlife consumption not only devastates species populations and destroys ecosystems, but it also has negative consequences for the whole of society, our economy, human health, and even national security. The [WLC Project](#) is part of a range of new initiatives from the Government of Vietnam aiming to address these issues.