MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

STATEMENT

BY

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PRESS CONFERENCE

OUTCOMES OF THE 2019 CITES CONFERENCE THAT TOOK PLACE GENEVA, SWITZERLAND”
The Eighteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took place during the period 17-28 August 2019, in Geneva Switzerland.

I headed the Namibian delegation and was accompanied by technical officials from the Ministry. Some community members from various conservancies also attended the conference.

Namibia submitted the following proposals and documents for consideration at CoP18;

- A proposal, seeking to transfer the Namibian White Rhinoceros population from Appendix I to Appendix II for the exclusive purpose of allowing international trade in:
  a) live animals to appropriate and acceptable destinations; and
  b) hunting trophies and;
  c) all other specimens will be traded in as Appendix I specimen

- A proposal, seeking to amend the elephant annotation to allow for trade in raw ivory for Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and also to remove some redundant provisions of the same annotation.

- A document asking for the Review of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention, together with Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
A proposed amendment to Resolution Conf. 4.6 (Rev. CoP17) and Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) to allow for community participation in CITES processes together with Zimbabwe.

A document calling for a formation of the Permanent Rural Community Committee to ensure that the voice of rural communities who are affected by CITES decisions is adequately heard with Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Zimbabwe, as co-proponents.

Unfortunately, all our proposals and documents were not supported and that poses a serious setback to our conservation programme which is based on sustainable use of our wildlife resources and as provided for in our national constitution.

In addition to the proposals that we submitted, there were also other proposals and documents which were submitted by other Parties with a bearing on the Namibian conservation program. Amongst others this included:

A proposal to list Giraffe on Appendix II (submitted by Central Africa Republic, Chad, Kenya, Mali, Niger and Senegal), which was accepted despite the fact that South African countries, in which more than 70% of the global giraffe population occurs were against the listing. Also irrespective the fact that international trade is not a threat to the giraffe population.
A document was also submitted Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, the Niger, Nigeria and Syrian Arab Republic on the closure of ivory markets. Namibia and other southern African countries expressed strong opposition, stressing that there was no evidence of a link between legal domestic markets and poaching. Namibia also stressed that domestic trade is outside the mandate of the CITES Convention hence the document was rejected.

It is unfortunate that this very important science based Convention which is supposed to be regulating sustainable trade has been turned into a non-sustainable wildlife tool. Decisions are also no longer based on science as well. My delegation and I walked in the conference with strong conviction that the principles for which the CITES was established for will be upheld.

In our understanding CITES should ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. All our submissions were based on this understanding and aimed at promoting conservation of our natural resources. Namibia is disappointed in the decisions that were made by CITES and it is for this reason that we are together with other Southern African countries, investigating options to ensure that the principles of sustainable use of wildlife are upheld.

Namibia will consult broadly in consideration of our membership to the CITES. We cannot be affiliated to something that does not support our interest and the wellbeing of our people.

With these few remarks, I thank you for attention.