

**PRESS RELEASE FROM UK 2020**

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## **Chinese government must act on illicit horn trade, urges Owen Paterson**

Former DEFRA Secretary Owen Paterson has spoken today in South Africa's Kruger National Park, calling for the Chinese government to accept its role in bring an end to both illicit and legal trading of rhino horn in China.

China maintains a limited legal rhino horn and ivory market to dispose of pre-existing stocks, but there have been increasing reports of illicit goods making their way into the legal market.

Owen Paterson insists that the best solution is to tackle the underlying cause of the problem: the desirability of rhino horn and ivory in China.

"The Chinese government has a record of success on this front," commented Mr Paterson. "Ten years ago, shark fin soup was all the rage in China. Today it is very definitely out of fashion thanks to a government initiative to shift attitudes. The government must do the same for rhino horn."

"We are drifting towards a world with no rhinos and no elephants in the wild," added Mr Paterson, "and I am not being sensationalist."

Owen Paterson travelled to South Africa earlier this week to see first-hand the destructive impact of poachers on rhino herds in the country.

Today he met General Johan Jooste, Head of Special Operations at South Africa National Parks, and the man charged with curbing the rise in rhino poaching.

“It is beyond depressing that between 2007 and 2011 there has been a 3,000 per cent increase in rhino poaching,” added Mr Paterson.

“A shocking 1,215 rhinos were killed for their horns in 2014 in South Africa alone.”

“Rhino horn has the same medicinal value as my toenail. Despite this, the seemingly insatiable appetite for rhino horn means that it is now fetching as much as £40,000 per kg.”

“We are losing a rhino every eleven hours and an elephant every fifteen minutes.”

“It should shame us all that the perilous situation of many of these species find themselves in is not as a result of some hideous disease that we can’t cure but as a result of human criminal violence.”

“We need a total ban on the trade of rhino horn and ivory and education in consumer countries, particularly in China.”

“We also need all rhino range countries to enforce the law and drive out endemic corruption. The middle men, traders and kingpins, all deep-seated in the system, need to be uprooted. These law-breakers largely remain untouchable and thrive on their organised crime.”

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Note to editors: For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on +44 (0)7889 617 003/ [nick@mippr.co.uk](mailto:nick@mippr.co.uk) or Beatrice Timpson on +44 (0)7803 726 977/ [beatrice@mippr.co.uk](mailto:beatrice@mippr.co.uk)

UK 2020  
55 Tufton Street  
London  
SW1P 3QL

[www.uk2020.org.uk](http://www.uk2020.org.uk)  
[info@uk2020.org.uk](mailto:info@uk2020.org.uk)

UK 2020 Limited is a company limited by guarantee registered at  
America House, Rumford Court, Rumford Place, Liverpool L3 9DD  
Company No. 09245454