

# VOTE CONSERVATION NOT COMMERCE



I write to you as my public representative under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Your vote at the next Conference of Parties could be crucial.

The convention is a critical stakeholder in ensuring a sustainable future for wildlife. It is imperative that you demonstrate leadership and commitment to long term rhino conservation by voting against any proposal to remove the existing annotation for white rhinos that would allow regulated legal trade in rhinoceros horns.

Despite the widespread adoption of science-based medicine, rhino horn has long been a prominent, but meaningless, component of traditional remedies in Asian countries.

Additionally, horns are symbols of wealth and status, and investors profit from rarity and extinction.

Due to their perceived quality and potency, Vietnamese rhino horn consumers were willing to pay more for horns sourced from wild and semi-wild rhinos according to a survey in 2021.

Legalised trade would constitute an inexcusable impediment to demand reduction and elimination campaigns and legitimise, popularise, and normalise the use of endangered species products while exploiting public naivety, misplaced beliefs, and misguided perceptions.

As conservation efforts focus more on reducing commercial exploitation, legalised sales are regressive. Parties that openly support sales of rhinoceros horns undermine those that oppose importing parts from endangered species and restrict domestic retailers from selling them.

Historically, experimental sales have not generated adequate conservation funds or reduced consumer demand.

The CITES-authorized sales of ivory in 1999 and 2008 resulted in a sharp increase in elephant poaching in Africa. As a previously unavailable item due to high black market prices and illegality, ivory flooded the market and became more affordable, reviving the waning carving industry. According to an investigation by the EIA in 2012, nearly 90 percent of ivory available on the 'legal' market was derived from illegal sources. Any sale of rhino horn would be likely to have the same devastating effects.

