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22 October 2012

President Jacob Zuma
One More Generation
P.O. Box 143627
Fayetteville, GA 30214

Dear President Jacob Zuma,

I am writing to you today to express my concern about the current issue of rhinoceros poaching in South Africa, and to encourage you to devote all possible resources towards combating this issue. I am a South African citizen currently studying at the University of Colorado and living in the United States; this issue still deeply concerns me. Not only are rhinos amazing creatures, but they are also a very important part of South Africa's economy--they are part of the big five. South Africa is home to 80% of the world's rhino population. There has been a devastating increase in poaching (News24). The number of rhinos killed in South Africa is expected to reach 530 by the end of this year. To decrease the poaching of rhinos in South Africa, the government needs to legalize horns being sold from rhinos that have died of natural causes.

Between 1990 and 2005, poachers in South Africa killed an average of 14 rhinos a year. Since then the numbers have increased significantly. In 2010, 333 rhinos were poached. Last year it was 448. So far this year, 430 rhinos have been lost to illegal killings (IANS). This puts the year 2012 on course to be the deadliest since records began. "Losing 500 a year, when it used to be 12 or 14 a year, is a crisis," stated a director monitoring wildlife trade for Traffic, a wildlife-monitoring network (Smith). South Africa was once seen as a world leader in the restoration and conservation of the endangered rhinoceros. What happened?

Poachers kill the rhinos and their horns are then removed and sold to markets in Asia for up to R1,161.32 per gram. It is then used as a status of wealth or ground up into powder and believed to cure diseases ranging from cancer to malaria. This has been scientifically proven wrong. As a custodian of these creatures, I ask of you to do whatever you can to stop this murder. What will become of our country and our world without the rhino? If poaching continues and increases, the 29,000 left worldwide will disappear within the next two decades. Conservationists have begun to talk about extinction, and then, unfortunately the rhino will start to exist only in people's minds. Our children and grandchildren will never have the opportunity to see a real life rhinoceros, and will only hear stories told about them.

Horn is in demand in the far Eastern regions of the world, where it has been used to treat various ailments for hundreds of years. South Africa has 20,000 White Rhinos and 2% die of natural

causes each year. We could supply the market with 400 horns from natural deaths of White Rhino alone. The South African Department of Environmental Affairs has suggested this as a solution as well. We also have large stockpiles of horn that has accumulated over many years. We can supply another 400 a year from these stockpiles for years to come. We can satisfy the demand on a sustainable basis, without the need to kill a single animal. The horns should be sold through a central selling organization and with large new legal supplies this may lower the amount of poaching. Law-enforcement is vital. Over the last year, anti-poaching effort has been increased by 20% and yet poaching has increased by 30%. The main objective of legal trade is to stop the killing. In addition, there will be about R600 million a year generated for parks and R200 million for private owners. Those profits will go into conservation rather than to criminals (Eustace).

I ask you to call for stronger measures to be taken to conserve the remaining rhino population as well as increased control of illegal hunting and trading activities. Effective conservation methods, investment, and significant political will within regions and countries will result in an increase in the rhino population. "You can put all the resources at home, but if you don't address the demand outside South Africa, you will not win the battle," the department's spokesman Albi Modise told AFP. Therefore, a lot more effort needs to be put into these consuming countries. I hope to convey the urgency and scale of the rhino conservation problem to you, and to ask you to do whatever you can to reduce the rhinos extinction.

We must conserve the rhinos. If we don't that means the big five is dead. This may lower the tourism, as well as lead to severe socio-economic implications in our country, which thrives on wildlife-based tourism as a key revenue earner. Protecting our nature reserves will result in sustainable tourism that provides employment to the people of our country, this will also contribute to the survival of the beloved rhinoceros for the benefit of generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "A. Musk".

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