

December 14, 2012



Dear President Zuma,

I hope this letter finds you well.

Are you hearing these days from many people around the world, including children, who are concerned about the dwindling population of rhinos in your country?

I am one of those concerned global citizens who is pleading with you to devote whatever resources are necessary to combat the scourge of of [deleted second "of" in Word doc] rhino poaching in your country.

As you well know, tourism accounts for a huge portion of South Africa's GDP. An incredible number of foreign visitors (upwards of 10 million, I've heard) come to your country each year to see the incredibly beautiful wildlife, including rhinos.

Unless hunting them is brought to a swift halt by your government, South Africa will lose one of its biggest tourist draws.

Equally tragic, earth's ecosystem will lose still another species that is integral to its health and survival.

Sadly, too, future generations of humans will lose the chance to see these magnificent creatures in their native land.

Current international media coverage and outrage surrounding poaching shows foreign visitors a side of South Africa that is unstable, violent, and callous. Please show the world the truth about your amazing country: that its social fabric is stable, that its people are kind and peace-loving.

I agree with this beautiful quote from iSimangaliso Wetland Park chief executive Andrew Zaloumis:

"Destroying endangered species is an ecological and economic crime. Not only are rhino part of our collective national heritage, [but] the presence of wildlife is a vital resource for the country and region. In a region marked by poverty, tourism and conservation are the biggest employers on which families' survival and paying school fees depend."

Here are a few a simple but powerful changes you can make that will halt rhino (and all Big Five) poaching, improve your economy, and elevate your country's stature in the eyes of the world:

- Institute and enforce much tougher laws that punish poaching gangs.
- Increase border security and checks for wildlife products so that they cannot be smuggled out of the country.
- Improve the education of South Africans, so they will understand the benefits to them and to their families of working with, rather than against, wildlife.

- Increase funding for the protection of rhinos and other South African animal species nationwide.
- Increase trade restrictions with countries that are knowingly supporting the eradication of Africa's irreplaceable animals.

Each of these changes will make an immediate and lasting difference and will allow these precious creatures to thrive.

And when they thrive, your country -- and the rest of the world -- will enjoy, for generations to come, all the beauty, peace, and prosperity that South Africa has to offer.

Thank you for listening to my pleas. I trust you want to -- and will -- do right by these animals, and by your beloved country and continent.

Warm wishes to you in fulfilling this mission,

Olivia

Olivia in Houston, Texas, USA

