



Namibian Chamber of Environment meets with Ambassador Qiu Xuejun of the People's Republic of China to Namibia

After receiving an Open Letter about wildlife crimes committed by some Chinese nationals in Namibia, the Chinese Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Namibia, His Excellency Qiu Xuejun, invited a delegation of representatives from the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) to meet with him and his delegation at the Chinese Embassy in Windhoek on 4th January 2017 to discuss the matter.

An open and frank exchange of views took place, followed by a constructive discussion of how to move forward. The Ambassador and his delegation stated that the Chinese government is absolutely opposed to all forms of criminal activity by Chinese nationals in Namibia, including wildlife and environmental crimes. The Ambassador also expressed a desire that his embassy, the Namibian environmental NGO sector and the Namibian government work together to effectively address the problem.

The NCE explained Namibia's conservation history, its key environmental policies that have led to this country having one of the most innovative and successful approaches to wildlife management in Africa, and the fact that these long-term investments by government, communities, the private sector, NGOs and donors were being undermined by unscrupulous criminals which were linked to international cartels and organized crime. The NCE confirmed that it and its members are willing and ready to work with the Chinese Embassy and the government of China to effectively address the problem of wildlife and environmental crimes.

To this end, the NCE delegation presented Ambassador Qiu Xuejun with a suggested list of actions as a basis for further discussion, and invited his delegation to contribute additional ideas. The constructive meeting and expressions of commitment by Ambassador Qiu Xuejun and his senior delegation has given some encouragement that the problems discussed will be more effectively addressed in future.

In follow-up communications with senior Embassy staff we have received further confirmation of commitment to work together to address the problems. However, China is now entering its most important annual event for the Chinese people, the Chinese New Year which falls on 28 January 2017 and covers a period of about 15 days – also known as the Spring Festival*. The NCE has therefore agreed to postpone further discussions until after the Chinese New Year.

We wish the Chinese community a happy and prosperous New Year, and we look forward to resuming constructive discussions in February, leading to positive outcomes for Namibia's wildlife and environment.

This statement is made to keep the Namibian public, who are rightfully deeply concerned about the state of poaching and other environmental crimes in Namibia, informed about progress following the publication of the Open Letter. We will continue to keep the public informed as we move forward.

Dr Chris Brown
CEO: Namibian Chamber of Environment

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* Some information on the Chinese New Year (Spring Festival)

According to the Chinese zodiac, 2017 is the Year of the Rooster. The Spring Festival has more than 4,000 years of history, originating during the Shang Dynasty (17th – 11th century BC). The festival used to be observed to fight against the monster “Nian” which liked to eat children and livestock. The monster was afraid of red colour and loud sound. Therefore, people decorated their houses in red and set off firecrackers to expel the monster.