

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Worldwide Call to Action by the Youth Against Wildlife Crime**

Building on the success of the 2014 World Youth Rhino Summit and 2015 Winter Summit, Project Rhino will host a third World Youth Wildlife Summit that will bring together 150 youth leaders and empower them to become local, national and international ambassadors for wildlife conservation.

The platform will provide a forum for passionate teenagers, the majority from southern Africa, with a focus on the Trans Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCA's), as well as Asia and other concerned countries, to engage with leading conservation experts and experience African wildlife first-hand.

The late Dr Ian Player, world-renowned rhino conservationist and speaker at the inaugural 2014 World Youth Rhino Summit, said, "We, the older generation, have done our bit. Now we pass the baton on to you – the youth. You need to make your voices heard...".

The delegates will gather at the Southern African Wildlife College at Kruger National Park, South Africa's most recognised game reserve, from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> September.

Driven by criminal organisations and rebel militias, the illegal wildlife trade is estimated to be worth up to \$23 billion and contributes to the dramatic decline of wild species. Wildlife poaching also puts human lives at risk - it is estimated that over 1 000 park rangers have been killed in the line of duty over the past 10 years.

The Summit will maintain a focus on rhino as an iconic species, but also broaden its emphasis to include other threatened African animals, such as the elephant, pangolin and lion. A panel of wildlife experts and activists will engage with the delegates and challenge them to develop possible solutions to the current threats of wildlife crime.

Francois du Toit, CEO of African Conservation Trust (a founding member of Project Rhino), and the Summit Director says fervently, "We're bringing youth together at a critical time, with species loss on a global scale. Wildlife Crime is a profitable business where communities and the conservation sector bear the cost."

Topics for discussion and debate at the Summit will include the sustainable use of wildlife resources and the biodiversity economy; strategies for demand reduction; the link between poverty and poaching; habitat loss, and the role of education and awareness. The youth delegates will be further equipped with the knowledge and tools to host, in partnership with local conservation organisations, mini-Summits and regional leadership workshops.

“We’re planning to host these World Youth Wildlife Summits every 2 years, and work with the delegates in developing realistic actions to support the wildlife and biodiversity economy, including supporting them in their career and enterprise choices and their vision of the world they want to live in,” adds du Toit.

The World Youth Wildlife Summit continues to build on the *Rhino Art – Let Our Children’s Voices Be Heard* campaign. An initiative of African celebrity explorer Kingsley Holgate and Project Rhino, it has reached close to 600 000 young people in Africa, Asia, the UK and New Zealand with a conservation message since 2013.

To support Project Rhino in this endeavour please contact Francois du Toit on +27828526466 or [ceo@projectafrica.com](mailto:ceo@projectafrica.com).

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