

NORTHERN WHITE RHINO COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS LAUNCHED

OI Pejeta Conservancy in Laikipia County was the venue for the launch of commemorative Posta Kenya stamps. Three stamps were launched featuring images of Sudan - the last male northern white rhino which died earlier this year - as well as Najin and Fatu, both females.

The last four northern white rhinos on earth which were deemed capable of breeding were brought to Kenya in 2009 from the Czech Republic, finding a home at the OI Pejeta Conservancy, thus a fitting venue for the stamp launch.

The event was graced by representatives of OI Pejeta Conservancy, senior government officials, representatives from Posta Kenya and avid philatelists, representatives of conservation NGO's, wildlife conservancies and ranches, and the Kenya Wildlife Service in an epic collaboration of diverse entities which share a common goal – to conserve Kenya's wildlife heritage. The launch brought to light the willingness of public and private entities to join hands and give their all, for the sake of wildlife.

The purpose of the launch was twofold: to spread awareness about the plight of the northern white rhino and indeed other endangered wildlife species, and to reiterate the government's commitment to supporting ongoing efforts to save the remaining two females through a proposed In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) technique, in the hope that any embryo resulting from a successful IVF procedure would then be implanted successfully into a surrogate southern white rhino. The end game is to possibly succeed in saving the northern white rhino from the jaws of extinction, as well as repopulating the rhino's indigenous rangelands in the country.

The representative of the Cabinet Secretary, Dr. Patrick Omondi, reiterated the government's stand against the poaching menace. He stressed that any parties found guilty of the possession of

ivory or rhino horn would earn the stiff penalties stipulated in the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (2013) – a fine of Kenya shillings 20 million, or a life sentence. He expressed deep regret about the recent poaching incident in Meru National Park whereby three rhinos were killed for their horns.