

13 March 2019

Submitted by telefax (+267 390 4017) and electronic mail (op.registry@gov.bw)

Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi
His Excellency, President of the Republic of Botswana,
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Your Excellency, President Dr. Masisi,

The undersigned organizations representing millions of members and supporters around the world sincerely and humbly request that you do not reinstate trophy hunting and that you also do not allow regular elephant culling.

In recent years Botswana has been hailed as a shining example of wildlife conservation, and a safe haven for elephants, who are free from harassment by trophy hunters and where poaching is relatively low. Nonetheless, we are saddened by reports from the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephant (MIKE) Programme under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that have pointed to an uptick in poaching in Southern Africa. In particular, Chobe National Park has experienced an increase in elephant poaching, according to the most recent [MIKE report](#). We also acknowledge your concern about the prevalence of human-elephant conflict in Botswana.

However, trophy hunting and elephant culling do not deter poaching, nor do they resolve human-elephant conflict. A successful elephant management plan should be science-based and sustainable in order to promote the long-term peaceful co-existence between humans and animals.

We are not aware of any country or community that allows trophy hunting and that also has no poaching or human-wildlife conflict. On the contrary, some of the highest levels of poaching of elephants and rhinos occur in countries that allow trophy hunting of these animals. For instance, the number of rhinos poached in Namibia has increased from zero in 2014 to 80 in 2016 according to Namibia government's Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) Management Strategy despite American trophy hunters having paid over one million U.S. dollars to the government of Namibia for the right to kill one of the few remaining critically endangered black rhinos on the continent. In Tanzania, the Selous Game Reserve, which is open to trophy hunting and once held the largest elephant populations in the country, lost [80 percent](#) of its elephants between 2007 and 2014, despite the prevalence of elephant trophy hunting in the country. The results of the [DNA analysis](#) confirmed that 7 out of the first 10 ivory seizures made between 2006 and 2011 originated in the cross border ecosystem of the Selous and Niassa Game Reserve, another elephant trophy hunting area.

In fact, trophy hunting is harmful to wildlife conservation. Trophy hunters tend to target prime age breeding males, the killing of whom disrupts the social structure and causes cascading negative impacts on populations, such as increased infanticide that results from the removal of dominant male lions and leopards. Conservationists have warned that trophy hunting is often poorly regulated, monitored or enforced and lacks vigorous, regular scientific reviews. The IUCN Red List assessment for the lion states that trophy hunting may have

contributed to [population declines](#) in Botswana amongst other countries. Furthermore, the big cat conservation group Panthera [remarked](#) that there is little evidence that trophy hunting fosters increased tolerance of leopards or other large carnivores. Therefore, offtake by trophy hunting likely compounds pressures on local leopard populations as new individuals move in to fill the niches caused by trophy hunting.

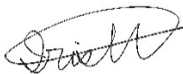
Elephant culling is not a permanent solution to human-elephant conflict. It may remove the problem for a time, but it will not control the continued growth of the elephant population, or the movement of elephants into the areas vacated by the culled elephants. Furthermore, culling causes immense social disruption, which can result in increased elephant aggression and [abnormal behaviour for many decades](#). This in turn, can be, detrimental to residents and tourists alike. There are many proven, science-based techniques which are successful at mitigating human-elephant conflict in other African countries. We urge you to employ non-lethal options instead of culling.

Elephants are an iconic African species, beloved by millions of people around the world, many of whom travel to Africa every year to personally observe the splendor of elephants and Africa's other majestic wildlife.

Botswana should take pride in being one of the last refuge areas for elephants. With attention drawn to the apparent upswing in poaching, we'd applaud your government's effort to combat elephant poaching to keep Botswana's elephants safe. We urge you to uphold Botswana's upstanding conservation legacy by continuing to prohibit trophy hunting in public lands and not allowing elephant culling.

Your Excellency, we extend our most sincere gratitude for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



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