



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM

Private Bag 13306
Windhoek

Tel. no. 061 – 284 2840
Fax. No. 061 – 22 99 36

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY

PRESS RELEASE

26 June 2018

STATEMENT ON LION ALLEGATIONS IN NAMIBIA

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has learnt with concern about the inaccurate and false reports and the assumptions made on social media over a lion that was destroyed at De Rust farm in the Kunene Region of Namibia on the 16 June 2018.

The lion was shot in response to repeated incursions and following days of attempts to alleviate the situation using non-lethal methods. The lion is part of the pride that has raided stock at De Rest farm, killing 27 goats and sheep as well as two donkeys inside the kraal. For many international followers this might be nothing but for households in Namibia this is a substantial loss.

The concerns are mostly from international community individuals or groups advocating for wildlife rights and lobbying against sustainable use of our wildlife. We have noted that despite numerous attempts and efforts to clarify our conservation methods, these groups are keen on spreading unfounded rumours aimed at tarnishing the image of our country with reference to our wildlife management and utilisation thereof.

Namibia, has subscribed to conservation methods that are tailor-made to address our situations and benefit our people as per the constitutional provision. These methods have been tried and tested with tangible results visible in terms of wildlife population growth and recoveries.

As a result of our conservation successes that tripled our wildlife numbers, cases of human wildlife conflict increased with animals like lions, elephants and crocodiles being the main culprits as people and wildlife continued to compete for resources and space. In this regard

our National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management was developed in such a way that it addresses our needs to conserve our wildlife while recognising and respecting the rights of the people and tourism development.

There are suggestions within our critics that we should overlook our own people's plights at the expense of tourists to the country. This is despite the fact that our citizens have accepted to share their living space with dangerous predators and animals which most of the time destroy their properties and other sources of their livelihoods. In some instances human lives are lost.

It is a pity and shameful to see that some international people still think Africans cannot run their own affairs and therefore should be subjected to their ideologies that have no regard for our people. For as much as we value tourism as an economic sector based on the revenue it generates, as responsible government we will always put the needs our people first without compromise or fail.

Unfortunately, we have a few individuals in Namibia who are simply unable to get their heads around the big picture of conservation on communal and commercial land, and the vital role that incentives, predator management and social acceptance play in the process. They cannot look into the future to see where Namibia needs to be in decades to come. They rather look at each lion individually. This is not conservation biology approach, but a more western urban short term animal rights approach which is higher counter-productive to the long term conservation.

Through social media, these individuals, self-proclaimed conservationists, prey on well-meaning but uniformed people in society. Because conservation biology is complex and difficult to explain in sound-bites, they prefer to project simplistic approaches and solutions, which failed worldwide. By contrast, Namibia has more wildlife today that at any given time in the past 100 years, increasing from about 0,5 million in the 1960s to about 3 million today.

From near extinction in 1960s, Namibia now has the largest free ranging population of black rhinos in the world, we also have the largest cheetah population in the world, our elephant population has more than doubled from a mere 7,500 in 1995 to over 22,000 to date and an increasing free roaming lion population outside National Parks.

The Ministry would like to bring to the attention of the public and the international community that lions occur across the entire north of Namibia and some parts of the country in the central and southern areas.

Our estimated lion population in the country is seven hundred (700) with four hundred and thirty (430) in Etosha National Park, one hundred and twenty (120) in Kunene Region where this incident occurred and parts of the Erongo Region, fifty (50) in the Khaudum National Park and surrounding areas of the Kavango East Region and Otjozodjupa Region, fifty (50) in the Zambezi Region and about ten (10) in some commercial farms.

There are also assertions that funds generated through trophy hunting are pocketed by individuals in leadership positions at the Ministry. We want to rubbish this claim by clarifying that funds generated through hunting are reinvested in the conservation of our wildlife through the Game Product Trust Fund and the Community Based Natural Resource Management programme as well as rural development.

The Ministry regards Human Wildlife Conflict as a serious problem that if not addressed appropriately, treated with necessary understanding and respect, and managed effectively, it has potential to harm and destroy conservation effort and tourism benefits for the country, and will therefore put measures in place to manage the conflict in a way that recognises the rights and development needs of local communities, recognizes the need to promote biodiversity conservation and ensure that decision making is quick and based on the best available information.

It must be clear that addressing human wildlife conflict requires striking a balance between conservation priorities and the needs of people who live with wildlife. Most Namibians depend on the land for their subsistence. But the presence of many species of large mammals and predators, combined with settlement patterns of people, leads to conflict between people and wildlife. It therefore necessary that mechanisms are created for rural communities and farmers to manage and benefit from wildlife and other natural resources.

Finally, we call upon all potential tourists to Namibia to disregard the advocacy against our country. Namibia's conservation is sound but by no means without challenges and the Ministry works hard to address them. Tourists should come and experience the beauty of our country from its amazing landscapes, our diverse cultures, to its abundance wildlife and in in this case our free roaming lions on communal land, commercial farm and National Parks. The Namibian public and the international community are thus called upon to ignore these inaccurate, false reports and assumptions on our lions and sustainable utilization practices.


Romeo Muyunda
MET Spokesperson

