



## OUR RESOURCES OUR RIGHTS

05 May 2021

Dear Sir. Ranulph Fiennes

### **The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting undermines successful conservation and human rights in Africa.**

As representatives of millions of rural Africans, the majority of whom live below the poverty line, we are urgently appealing to you, as a celebrity with status, to stop undermining our globally recognised conservation efforts and our basic human right to sustainably use the natural resources on which our communities' livelihoods depend.

In recent years you have lent your name and voice to campaigns to stop hunting in Africa. Using your celebrity power in this way is undermining global conservation efforts as highlighted in [this article](#). Just a few days ago you requested for support for a complete ban on trophy hunting imports into the UK. We acknowledge that you are doing so with the best of intentions and we welcome your interest in our wildlife. But you have expressed these views without full appreciation of the implications for our people or wildlife, and without consulting us, who live with and manage African wildlife and who will ultimately determine its future. Indeed, The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting at which you are an Ambassador, dismisses the beneficial impacts of regulated trophy hunting on local communities and our wildlife populations as 'myths'. Such a move will have devastating consequences for our livelihoods as well as for conservation, which is eloquently explained [in this article](#) by globally renowned conservation scientists and in this [video](#) sharing our perspective.

Successful conservation must start with those of us who live alongside dangerous large animals, whose value is deeply ingrained in our cultures. During colonial times, European colonists removed our rights to manage and benefit from these animals, and in many instances forcefully evicted us from our lands, often to make way for protected areas. This led to dramatic loss of wildlife and habitat – a disaster for conservation, our traditions and our livelihoods. Post-independent governments restored our rights, integrating wildlife into rural economies through inclusive conservation approaches. This provided socio-economic incentives to live with and sustainably manage our wildlife.

- On average, 50 - 90% of these economic incentives come from sustainable, regulated, humane and scientifically verified hunting methods. This has led, in southern African countries, to increasing wildlife populations and habitat, in stark contrast to other regions in the world where biodiversity loss and habitat destruction accelerate at disastrous rates.
- Habitat has increased by 80% over the last three decades in many of our countries, often with corresponding increases in wildlife numbers.

Although you may view elephants, lions and other wildlife through a romantic, idealized lens, our daily reality of living with these magnificent and valued, yet dangerous animals, requires more pragmatism. We worry daily that our children may be killed on their way to school, or that our ability to provide for our families will be destroyed within a few hours by elephants in our fields or large predators among our livestock. Some facts for consideration:

- As recently as 23 April 2021, a 48 year old farmer was killed by an elephant in Mbire district in Zimbabwe, while guarding his crops with his wife and daughter. He suffered head and leg injuries and died on the spot.
- In Botswana, elephants killed 36 people in 2018, injured dozens more, and destroyed the livelihoods of thousands.
- In Mozambique, wildlife killed 265 people over a 27-month period from July 2006 to September 2008.

Despite this, elephants, lions and other species live amongst us, not only in protected areas, and are multiplying because we want them to. The harsh reality is that if incentives for us to conserve and share our land with wildlife are removed, their future in Africa will be as bleak as that of wolves, brown bears and other large carnivores that were once plentiful in the UK, Europe and the US.

You have every right to consider regulated, sustainable hunting abhorrent and we appreciate that for those not familiar with the realities of rural Africa, it may seem a counter-intuitive conservation strategy. But if your objective is conservation – not solely recognising individual animal rights – we call upon you, to understand the context of coexisting with dangerous wildlife: consider our perspectives, evidence base, and success stories from a conservation method that recognises the basic human right of our peoples to manage and benefit from the sustainable use of our natural resources. If we cannot feed our families through humane and sustainable use of wildlife, we will have no option but to adopt land uses that will invariably destroy our beautiful natural landscapes and exterminate our treasured wild animals – an all too familiar situation throughout the world.

It will be no news to you that many of our countries are not wealthy or endowed with rich resources. One of those which we do have, wildlife, is demonstrably managed responsibly and sustainably. We are tired of people from elsewhere, far removed from our realities, talking on our behalf and undermining our success. We are an integral part of the solution to illegal wildlife trade, poaching and unsustainable use of biodiversity. It is disappointing that while animal rights campaigns to stop hunting have raised enormous sums of money, we have yet to see evidence of those funds conserving African wildlife or benefiting any of our communities in their role as custodians of that wildlife. What and who do these campaigns benefit? Their impact will be to remove our incentives to manage and live side by side with wildlife. Imposing worldviews and value systems from far away places, amplified through your powerful, influential voices, results in disastrous policies that undermine our rights and conservation success.

We recognize and respect the rights of Western celebrities and animal protectionist campaigners to discuss how best to manage African wildlife. However, these discussions must be informed by our voices as custodians of this wildlife. At a minimum this should acknowledge both our conservation successes and our communities' right to earn a livelihood through the culturally appropriate and sustainable

management of our resources for the benefit of our people and wildlife. Anything less is to put the rights of animals before the rights of Africans.

We write this letter as the world is demanding the acknowledgement and righting of past and present wrongs in the form of historical erasure, plunder of resources, labour exploitation, structural inequalities and imposition of unjust Western values and belief systems based on privilege. We want you to hear our voices; our conservation successes and lived realities are not 'myths'. We would like to invite you to visit our communities to witness and understand the realities of conservation in Africa. **We trust that you will agree that our human right to sustainably manage the natural resources on which we rely for our livelihoods is not negotiable. Anything less is to put the rights of animals before the rights of African's.**

**Signed for and on behalf of:**

Nano Cruz, President, Green Nation Association, Angola

Botshelo Sesinyi, Manager, Okavango Community Trust, Botswana

Siyoka Simasiku, Director, NCONGO, Botswana

Dick George, Director, Maun Snake Capture, Botswana

Chifundo Dalireni , Programme Coordinator, Wildlife and Environment Society of Malawi

Malidadi Berlings Langa, Chairperson, Kasungu Wildlife Conservation for Community Development Association (KAWICCODA), Malawi

Dorothy Malesu Manga, Namibia, Sikunga Conservancy- Committee member of the Conservancy

Lorna Dax, Namibia, #Khaodi //Haos Conservancy – Conservancy Manager

Mervin //Gaseb, Tsiseb Conservancy, Namibia - Chairperson

Iyambo !Naruseb , Namibia , Otjimboyo Conservancy- Chairperson

Zak Dirkse, !Kho !Naub Conservancy Southern Namibia - Chairperson

Hilda Nakathinge, Sheya Shuushona Conservancy, North Central Regions, Namibia – Chairperson

John Bobby Itengula, Ipumbu Ya Tshilongo Conservancy, Omusati Region North Central Region, Namibia – Chairperson

Eva N. Iikondja, Namibia Uukwaludhi Conservancy - Chairperson

Max Junior Wa Midhi, Namibia, Muduva Nyangana Conservancy, Kavanago East Regions, Namibia- Chairperson

Gerson //Aiseb, Chairperson, Sorris Sorris Conservancy, Southern Kunene, Namibia

Echanis Mutoma, Chairperson Mayuni Conservancy, Zambezi, Namibia

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Nyama Morgan, Chairperson, Wuparo Conservancy, Zambezi, Namibia

Masangu Leonard, Chairperson, Kabulabula Conservancy, Namibia

Muchila Ryco, Chairperson, Nakabolelelwa Conservancy, Namibia

Saisai Doreen, Chairperson, Salamabala Conservancy, Namibia

Ntelamo Eugene, Chairperson, Bamunu Conservancy, Namibia

Slyskan Sampofu, Chairperson, Balyerwa Conservancy, Namibia  
Dr Lamson Makuleke, Makuleke People, South Africa  
Fadhili Njilima , Independant Community Leader, Tanzania  
Benedict Benson Lisoso, WWGP Coordinator, Tanzania  
Dr Rodgers Lubilo, Chair, Zambia CBNRM Forum  
Felix Shanungu, President, National Community Resources Board Association  
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Innocent Mavunela Conservation Committee Chairperson Chipinge District, Zimbabwe  
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