



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

**RESPONSE BY HON. POHAMBA SHIFETA (MP), MINISTER
OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM TO
QUESTIONS RAISED BY HON. JAN J. VAN WYK ON
EXPORT OF LIVE ELEPHANTS TO THE UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES, DUBAI**

17 March 2022

I thank you for the opportunity to address this August House on the questions brought forward by Hon. Jan J. van Wyk on issues related to the export of live elephants to the United Arab Emirates, Dubai.

Hon. Speaker,

Allow me to share some background information to bring the house on the same page before I answer Hon. Van Wyk's specific questions.

The Ministry offered for sale 170 elephants through an open public bidding process which opened on 3 December 2020 and closed on the 29th January 2021. The intention of the sale was to reduce elephant numbers in selected areas identified as human-elephant conflict hot spots in order to mitigate extensive damages to properties, life losses

and a disruption of people's livelihoods. As a result, the 170 adult elephants included 30 from Omatjete area, 50 from Kamanjab-commercial farming area, 60 from Grootfontein-Kavango cattle ranch area and 30 Grootfontein-Tsumkwe area.

Hon. Speaker,

Out of the 170 adult elephants offered for sale, only 57 were successfully sold and the buyers are individual Namibians, who are now the legal owners of those elephants. Of the 57 sold, 37 have been captured and fully paid for, of which 15 remain in Namibian, and 22 adults have been exported to Dubai by a Namibian buyer. The 15 elephants that have remained in Namibia were captured from Khorixas area, and these are the same elephants that also roamed in the Omatjete area. The 22 elephants which have been exported were captured from Kamanjab commercial farming area.

The remaining 20 elephants are still to be captured pending a signed agreement and full payment.

The Ministry is expected to generate a total of N\$5.9 million from this sale, once all the animals have been paid. It is important to mention at

this juncture that the above-mentioned amount does not include any cost related to capture, translocation or care. All those costs are additional and the buyers are solely responsible for that.

The funds generated through this sale will be reinvested in wildlife conservation, more specifically for the management of human-wildlife conflict in communal area conservancies, and other elephant conflict hotspot areas.

Hon. Speaker,

On the 14th of February 2022, the Ministry issued a press release to update the Public on this matter.

With that background information provided, Hon. Speaker, allow me to briefly respond to the specific questions raised by Hon. van Wyk.

Question 1:

Could the Hon. Minister enlighten this August house, and the Nation on allegations that a cargo plane from Kazakhstan has landed at the Hosea Kutako Airport last night (01 March 2022) to

transport elephants to Dubai and the El Sharhaj African Theme Park, in particular?

Answer:

It is important to note that the Ministry sold elephants to Namibian buyers only, hence we are not responsible for any logistic arrangements related to the exportation of any elephants. Our sole responsibility as Government is to issue all necessary documents/permits as applied for by the buyer, who is the exporter. However, I am aware that a cargo plane landed at Hosea Kutako International Airport on 03 March 2022 to transport the elephants to Dubai. And just to go a bit further than the question, the same plane left on 04 March 2022 with the elephants on board.

Question 2:

Is it true that the “deal” was sealed during your last visit, attending the launch of the Dubai Expo? If your answer is in the affirmative, would you please inform the Nation about the details of the transaction and disclose the amount involved

Answer:

This is not true, as I said, the Ministry has sold elephants directly to Namibians only not to anyone in Dubai and I was not in Dubai during the launch of Tourism Expo and I have never discussed any elephant related deal with any entity in Dubai or with anyone. The elephants were sold to individual Namibian buyers and one of those buyers has decided to sell his elephants to Dubai.

Question 3:

Hon. Minister, if all procedures were followed, why the secrecy with regard to the movement of the animals from Buitepos area via Gobabis to the HKIA and why should it take place at night?

Answer:

There is nothing secretive about this operation Hon. Van Wyk. As I said earlier, as part of the background information, the Ministry issued a press release on this matter and we specifically said one of the buyers decided to sell his elephants outside Namibia. There is nothing illegal or unlawful for an individual owner of wild animal sell his or her animals inside or

outside the country as long as or legal requirements of both domestic law and international are met. This is not a new practice. As for the transportation of elephants at night, that is a norm. Live animals are better transported at night when it is cooler because during the day it is too hot. High temperatures can lead to unnecessary loss of animals.

Question 4:

Is it true that these animals will be a point of attraction at an event in Dubai in the next few days, boosting attempts by Namibia to attract more buyers, to sell off “Namibian Resources”?

Answer:

The question is not so clear about the event being referred to but I assume it is the Dubai Expo. In any case, it is not true, the Government has not organised anything of that nature.

Question 5:

Hon. Minister, would you agree that the export of African animals to foreign countries, in the long term would divert the interest tourists may have in Africa to other destinations such as Dubai, resulting in Namibia and Africa losing out on the much-needed revenue?

Answer:

Tourists mainly come to Africa to see animals in their natural habitats. Even if some animals are exported to foreign countries, the natural habitat will never be exported.

Hon. Speaker, I think I have done justice to all the questions of Hon. Van Wyk.

I thank you all.