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Namibia Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA) Press Release on Elephant issues

Once again Namibian elephants are making headlines. Once again the issue appears to be more of a “white elephant”, if looked at from a rational, objective and, more importantly, scientific perspective.

NAPHA was approached for comment on this matter, and although it is not a directly hunting related issue, we do feel the need to make our voice heard on this, as we are concerned with nature conservation issues at large.

Before we want to comment on some technical issues and insinuated repercussions, we would like to quote from our own press release a year ago in order to stress a few points:

“The main problem in this is that it is mainly an emotional debate by people - however well-meaning - who live detached from nature and far away from any and all direct problems associated with wild elephants. These people nonetheless feel an emotional connection to all things natural - understandably so. Yet what these people fail to see is that also those who are directly affected and confronted by wild elephants on a daily basis are emotional about this topic, with the difference that their livelihoods are deeply threatened. So we always have to bear in mind that there is a different side to the coin as well.”

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism in its statement said that the ministry and by implication the government have a responsibility to first and foremost protect the lives of Namibian citizens; this is a vitally important aspect when one has to consider the bigger picture.

Conservation can simply not be at the expense of human life at large; that is something we will have to live with. For a moment just imagine that your life or the life of a loved one is at an immediate and grave threat from an elephant - what would you do? However, the issue is naturally more complex than this. Especially because as hunters we are concerned conservationists as well. Conservationists, also those that do not hunt,



have to take a holistic look at what needs to be done to conserve elephants for future generations. In order to do this we have to put emotions aside;

we need to be aware of them and understand them, but we need to base our decisions and understanding on scientific facts. That is if we really want to sustainably protect natural surroundings. And that should be the essence

of it all: protect natural surroundings, habitats, instead of focussing on individual species or, even worse, on individual animals.”

The above should provide some background to those who have missed - or ignored - how the present debate came about (for the full press release from last year, please click [here](#) or see the attached).

The whole debate is actually redundant from a scientific and legal perspective; it is simply an emotional shouting match instigated and fired by woke western animal “welfare/ rights” groups who have found puppets in Namibia and simultaneously are aiming at hijacking organisations like CITES. These woke western animal “welfare/ rights” groups have no scientific backing and strategy and have zero regard for local communities and their rights. Any further elaboration on the doings and functioning of such groups is a waste of time, energy and ink.

What has to be stressed, is, that no national or international (including CITES) laws were broken by the export of these elephants. Namibia has a CITES approved export quota, that cannot simply be abolished because some (western) people feel offended that they were not asked about their opinion or did not provide viable alternatives. Would CITES now suddenly backtrack on this quota, it would be like an animal welfare organisation using 95% of funds (donations) to cover operating costs, while claiming that the funds go to conservation.

It should also be expressly noted that NAPHA is not condoning that wild elephants land in captivity somewhere (whether in Namibia or elsewhere); there are much more effective ways to deal with this problem in our view. However NAPHA is acutely aware of the elephant problem in Namibia. And this elephant problem is not a problem of what arm-chair conservationists think should happen with Namibia’s elephants, but a problem where there are far too many elephant in Namibia for the available habitat. Not only are these elephant destroying the habitat (their own and that of many other animal species), but they are also causing real conflict with local communities and farmers that are not inside the available elephant range.



It has also been insinuated that CITES may decide to strip Namibia of its sovereignty in regards to how Namibia chooses to utilise its CITES approved quota, and the repercussions that this would have on the sustainable conservation hunting of elephant in Namibia (i.e. we assume that those hopefuls bargain on a ceasing of all elephant hunting in Namibia). It surely is the hope of - and would be in line with current world wide developments of liberalism - the woke “conservationists” that CITES will budge under their pressure. CITES is and should continue to follow science and scientific principles in their decision making (opposed to popular opinion propagated in the mainstream Media), and moreover CITES should respect the sovereignty of especially developing countries who have a history of remote rule and control. It is for this reason that NAPHA cannot fathom a take-over by CITES and we strongly condemn anyone or any organisation that supports such a take-over.

Lastly, we would like to reiterate what we have said before: NAPHA does not wish to interfere or question our line ministry’s decision making in matters that are not related to hunting as such. Nonetheless, we still see a responsibility to engage in a constructive and measured debate, as we are as always concerned about the health of our natural surroundings. Elephants - if properly understood and seen in context - are an important part of nature. As a hunting community we continually evolve and with special regard to elephants, see an obligation to ensure that our doings are truly sustainable and of no detriment to the population at large. Not least for this reason, NAPHA is proud to have introduced an age-related trophy measuring system that in the long run - if taking up by policy makers - will ensure that hunting and elephant hunting remains to be sustainable.

Issued by NAPHA President and Executive Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Axel Cramer', written over a horizontal line.

Axel Cramer
President
Namibia Professional Hunting Association