



PRESS RELEASE

FACE: EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR HUNTING & CONSERVATION

Hunting supports people and wildlife in Africa

In view of the CITES CoP17, to be held in South Africa in September, Members of the European Parliament and stakeholders discussed the important relationship between well-regulated international trade legislation and sustainable trophy hunting as a tool to support communities and conservation in Africa.

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 26 January 2016 – Shall the EU stop all imports of trophies from developing countries? This was one of the questions that MEPs posed to African Government officials, international wildlife trade experts and conservationists at the conference “*Wildlife, use it or lose it?*” held today in the European Parliament. Seeking to debunk common misconceptions, with a view of better understanding the available policy options for the conservation of wildlife, the conference chaired by MEP Renata BRIANO aimed at discussing the EU’s strategic objectives for CITES CoP17.

“Trophy hunting is an important economic driver for our country”, said Namibian Minister for Environment and Tourism, Hon. Pohamba SHIFETA. “Our model empowers local communities to sustainably manage wildlife with economic incentives directly derived from the governance of hunting. In this regard, initiatives to ban trophy hunting not only represent an unacceptable modern form of moral colonialism, but will have detrimental effects on our local communities and our wildlife, ending in the proliferation of poaching. We must all strive to uphold the benefits of CITES as an appropriate regulatory tool ensuring the sustainable use of wildlife”.

Mr SHIFETA made a final appeal: “We are faced with international criminals who want to destroy our wildlife. We need concerted anti-poaching efforts. It will be contrary to our common efforts if decisions are not based on empirical evidence and don’t take into account communities. Let us support sustainable use instead of banning it”.

Other speakers at the conference stated that for wildlife to survive outside (and even inside) of protected areas in Africa, people must have strong incentives to tolerate, or ideally embrace, wildlife as a land use. In this regard, trophy hunting is a major industry in parts of Africa, creating incentives for wildlife conservation over vast areas, which otherwise might be used for alternative and less conservation friendly land uses.

Furthermore, it was argued that trophy hunting gives large areas of land ‘conservation value’. For example, over 1.4 million km² in sub-Saharan Africa is used for trophy hunting, which is more than state land provided for wildlife. This makes trophy hunting viable across large areas where other activities are not viable, including areas with little infrastructure, relatively low wildlife densities, and political instability.

With regard to wildlife crime, one of the world’s biggest threats to biodiversity loss, the speakers identified priorities and actions to tackle this challenge with a view of the accompanying the EU agenda for CITES CoP17. The speakers agreed that sustainable use of wildlife must be considered as a tool for conservation, economic development and as an anti-poaching policy, fully acknowledging the role of local communities and the international marketplace.

MEP Renata BRIANO stressed the importance for policy makers, at international and local level, to be able to choose the most appropriate policy option, moving away from prejudices. “It may seem counterintuitive for most of us, but well-regulated hunting enables better wildlife management. Where trophy hunting contributes to conservation, it effectively counters wildlife crime, so policy makers have the obligation of considering it amongst the available policy options”.

Anna SEIDMAN from Safari Club International explained that “Sustainable hunting does not drive species toward extinction as many anti-hunting groups would like the world to believe. On the contrary, sustainable hunting provides economic incentive to conserve wildlife. For example, it was hunting that brought about the recovery of the *blesbok* in South Africa from population lows of less than 2,000 animals in the early 1900’s to more than 250,000 today. Similarly, the ability to legally and sustainably hunt white rhinos has enabled their recovery from a mere handful in 1900 to more than 20,000 today”.

Anna SEIDMAN presented the case study of Botswana which was early pioneer of community-based conservation, with hunting providing the economic incentive for community participation. Wildlife thrived, and people’s livelihood increased. But in 2014, the president of Botswana banned hunting and the consequences are already being felt. Community-based organizations have gone bankrupt, jobs have been lost and revenue has dried up. But most importantly, people’s positive attitude towards wildlife is disappearing.

MEP Karl-Heinz FLORENZ, President of the Intergroup *Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside* concluded by saying that: “We have learned today that there are cultural and economic factors to be taken into account, as well as the requirements of local communities without losing from our sight the principle of sustainable use. CITES offers a strong scientifically founded framework for the governance of wildlife trade, which also recognizes subsidiarity, an important factor ensuring the support of the countries of origin of wildlife products. We invite the European Commission to prepare a good report acknowledging the complexities that were highlighted today before presenting it in the ENVI Committee”

Background

CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) regulating international exports and imports in specimens of wild animals, including hunting trophies, at sustainable levels. CITES has currently 180 Parties, including the EU and its Member States. The international trade of trophies is regulated under this convention as hunting is recognised to have a positive impact on wildlife conservation.

In trophy hunting, trophies of hunted game are taken as a personal record of a successful hunt. In Africa, it is characterised by high fees for ‘trophy’ species and low off-take volume, as part of a programme administered by a government, community-based organisation, NGO, or other legitimate body.

CITES provides a legal basis for trophy hunting, recognising the distinction between strictly governed sustainable use and illegal exploitation of wildlife linked to international organised crime. For example, as a result of the conservation benefits to the black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) from trophy hunting, CITES allows its trophies to be imported and exported, which is the only trade permitted in this species.

Where hunting has been prevented, species have declined. For example, in Kenya, because of a ban on hunting (and other ways of utilising wildlife for profit), in place since 1977, the country has lost between 60 and 70 per cent of its large wild animals¹. Consequently, demand can only be met through the illegal market, which primarily relies on the killing of rhinos by poachers for their horns².

¹ Norton-Griffiths, M. (2007) Whose wildlife is it anyway? *New Scientist*. Vol. 193: 2596.

² Leader-Williams, N. (1992) *World Trade in Rhino Horn: A Review*. TRAFFIC International, Cambridge.

The 2014 ban on trophy hunting in Botswana suggests that similar an increase in poaching is occurring there³.

Most of the hunted individuals (e.g. 96% in South Africa in 2012) are often from more common and abundant species⁴. The authors of recent study entitled “Banning Trophy Hunting Will Exacerbate Biodiversity Loss” argue that where political and governance structures are adequate, trophy hunting can help address the ongoing loss of species⁵. Trophy hunting can also finance reintroductions, for example, black wildebeest (*Connochaetus gnou*) and southern white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) in South Africa.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

FACE is the European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation. Established in 1977, FACE **represents the interests of Europe’s 7 million** hunters as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation. FACE is made up of national hunters’ associations from 35 European countries including the EU-28. FACE is supported by 7 associate members and is based in Brussels. FACE is the largest democratically representative body for hunters in the world, with elections for its statutory bodies taking place every three years. Each country represented within FACE receives one vote.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe. More on www.face.eu.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS, QUOTES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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³ Somerville K. (2015) *No longer at ease: clouds on the horizon for Botswana’s conservation success story*. African Arguments. July 23, 2015.

⁴ Cloete, P.C., Van der Merwe, P. and Saayman, M. (2015) *Profitability of the game ranching industry in South Africa*. Second edition. Pretoria: Caxton Publishers.

⁵ Di Minin, E.D., Leader-Williams, N., Bradshaw, C.J.A. (2015) Banning Trophy Hunting Will Exacerbate Biodiversity Loss. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*.