

Warsaw, 23 March 2019
Lausanne, 23 March 2019

Dr Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi
His Excellency, President of the Republic of Botswana,
Private Bag 001, Gaborone
Botswana

Your Excellency, President Dr. Masisi,

We the undersigned would like to express our support to the Botswana Government in its efforts to reinstate the principles of sustainable use in its wildlife management policies and operations.

If the Great Elephant Census has taught us anything, it is that Value Destruction results in Population Reduction. Since the 1970s, we have seen populations of elephants decline most dramatically in African regions where elephants have been most seriously devalued through lack of active management for the good of rural populations and national economies. Whether it is in forest regions of Central Africa or the savannahs of Eastern Africa, everywhere trading ivory has been banned, hunting eliminated, and trading animal products criminalized, populations of elephants have dramatically decreased.

On the other hand, in Southern Africa, the countries that legalized hunting and endeavoured to preserve and trade ivory have seen elephant populations expand beyond what their habitats can naturally support.

The reason why Value Destruction results in Population Reduction is because wildlife conservation, especially for large mammals, is primarily a land use issue. Large wild animals need space to thrive. How much space per animal depends largely on available food and water resources. It also depends on what the animal is competing with. CITES – the Convention on International **Trade** of Endangered Species – was founded on this principal. Its purpose was to **increase** the value of wildlife through regulated trade so communities and nations had financial incentives to expand ranges where wildlife could thrive instead of converting those lands into farms and ranches. This work was never going to be easy, but it was vital.

Unfortunately, CITES is losing its way. Instead of adopting sustainable conservation measures, CITES is punishing success and rewarding failure. Instead of modelling successful programs like those in Zimbabwe and South Africa – and until 2014 in Botswana – where rhinos were saved and elephants thrive in huge numbers, Animal Rights influenced NGOs are expressly and overtly trying to strip all commercial value from elephants and rhinos. They are turning large mammals into vermin for the people

who share the land with them, making the benefits of eradication outweigh the costs of preserving rangelands. As the human population in Africa expands, people have greater need for farms and ranches to feed their population, not to mention resources to fight extreme poverty throughout the continent. What will happen to elephants, rhinos and other large animals that consume vast quantities of water and vegetation and compete for fertile regions if they are made worthless?

There is huge economic value in the sustainable use of wildlife. Realizing this value will improve the lives of the people of Botswana while concurrently, with active management, conserve the healthy ecology of rangelands.

We urge you to listen to your people, not to outsiders who have no stake in Botswana's success.

Your excellency, with sincere best wishes,



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