



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ARTS

**STATEMENT BY HON. JEAN KAPATA, MP, MINISTER OF TOURISM AND
ARTS ON THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON CAT HUNTING IN ZAMBIA**

JULY 2015

Mr. Speaker,

I thank you for according me this opportunity to issue a Ministerial Statement on the lifting of the ban on cat hunting. I am aware that the public has received this development with mixed reactions and I, therefore, wish to shed more light on this subject.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me to state that the Patriotic Front (PF) Government, under the able leadership of His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, attaches great importance to the development of the tourism sector due to its potential to contribute to job creation, poverty reduction and economic well-being of the people at the grassroots. You may wish, to note that wildlife still remains the mainstay of leisure tourism in this country. Zambia subscribes to both consumptive and non-consumptive tourism.

Mr. Speaker,

This August House and the public at large may need to note that in Zambia, wildlife has been designated to 20 National Parks and 36 Game Management Areas (GMAs), totaling 236,376 square kilometers which is equivalent to 31.4 % or one-third of the national territory. Of the 20 national parks, only four: namely; Kafue, South Luangwa, Lower Zambezi and Mosi-oa-Tunya, are self-sustaining.

The wildlife estate is managed by Zambia Wildlife Authority, whose strength is currently only 1,250 Wildlife Police Officers. To effectively, manage the wildlife estate at optimal levels, ZAWA needs at least 3,500 Wildlife Police Officers.

Mr. Speaker,

The current capacity of ZAWA and even if it were at its full man power strength, it is not possible for Government to effectively manage and protect wildlife resources alone. To this effect, the Zambia Wildlife Act No. 12 of 1998 provides for co-management of wildlife estates with communities living around Game Management Areas (GMAs) and the private sector. This is an International best practice for wildlife conservation and management.

Mr. Speaker,

As this August House may recall, Government effected the ban on cat hunting and including the suspension of safari hunting in the nineteen (19) hunting blocks on 10th January 2013. Some of the reasons advanced included; weak regulatory mechanisms, declining lion populations in some areas due to indiscriminate and over harvesting, depletion of habitats for lions and unreliable statistics upon which to base quotas.

Mr. Speaker,

I am happy to report that most of the parameters that informed imposition of the ban on cat hunting and suspension of safari hunting in the nineteen hunting blocks no longer hold because Government implemented various measures to improve the situation.

Mr. Speaker,

You may wish to note that Zambia has three big cat clusters namely: Luangwa Valley, Kafue and Lower Zambezi ecological systems. According to the current statistical data, it is estimated that there are between 1,500 to 2,500 Lions and about 4,000 leopards in all these 3 clusters combined. In view of these estimates, Zambia is ranked highly in-terms of its big cat population in the sub-region after Tanzania, South Africa and Botswana.

Mr. Speaker,

Based on the current Lion population estimates, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has listed Zambia's Lion population in Appendix II. This means that from a global perspective, Zambia's Lions population could be hunted and trophies derived from the hunts can be exported to other CITES member states.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me to inform this August House and the public that in addition to establishing lion and leopard population in the county, Government, through a consultative process, has produced a comprehensive document that describes the status of lions and prescribes modalities for regulating cat hunting in Zambia. These modalities are similar to what is currently obtaining in our neighbouring countries like Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and have proved to be effective. This gives

us confidence that we are not operating without proper guidelines, because we are basing our decision on facts and evidence. The modalities will be crafted into a statutory instrument so that they become part our Wildlife Law.

Mr. Speaker,

Government, taking into consideration of these positive developments, cautiously lifted the ban on cat hunting on 10th May 2015. I, therefore wish to emphasize the following points:

1. Leopard hunting shall resume in 2015/2016 hunting season ; and
2. Lion hunting shall only resume in the 2016/2017 hunting season with very cautionary quotas where only two lions will be allowed in prime hunting areas and one; in secondary and game ranches.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to remind the nation that the main thrust of safari hunting is cat-hunting, which mostly involves hunting of Lion and Leopard. The ban on cat hunting, therefore, affected the consumptive tourism or safari hunting and consequently wildlife conservation and management. As alluded to earlier, the best mode for wildlife conservation is co-management with the communities living in surrounding GMAs and the private sector.

Mr. Speaker,

The ban on cat hunting meant that both the community and the private sector were pushed out of the picture in wildlife conservation. Subsequently, communities were denied access to the key resource of

their economic livelihood whereas the safari companies could no longer sustain employees on their payroll. Considering that the weak capacity for ZAWA to manage both the National Parks and GMAs, illegal harvesting of wildlife resources could not effectively be controlled. If this situation was to be left unchecked, the country risked losing its valuable resource. Like in any other business, the principle in wildlife conservation is simple, *“you need money to make money”*. Thus, the wildlife sector should engage in viable business in order to sustainably conserve wildlife.

Mr. Speaker

I am aware of the misconception that hunting is destructive because it involves killing. This is not a correct position in wildlife conservation and management. On the contrary, if hunting is carefully done, it significantly contributes to the conservation of the very species being hunted. This is because the revenue is ploughed back into conservation activities, thereby, contributing to job creation by Safari Companies and uplifting the livelihoods of local communities who are the custodian of the wildlife resource.

Mr. Speaker

The public may wish to note that in safari hunting, Quotas are carefully set to ensure that there is no over-hunting. These Quotas are based on population estimates of animals; species by species. Hunting is never done indiscriminately as some quarters of our society may want to portray. It is only the small apex population of the old animals that are hunted. This is why we set age limits of animals that can be hunted

which are targeted by experienced professional hunters during hunting. In addition, we also do not allow the hunting of female cats. This way safari hunting is not destructive but a sustainability strategy in wildlife conservation and management.

Mr. Speaker

It is my sincere hope that members of the public will now understand that lifting of the ban on cat hunting was well-informed and intended as it is meant to enhance the conservation of wildlife and improve the economic well-being of local communities.

Finally, I wish to appeal to all the Honourable Members of Parliament of this August House and the public at large to support these measures that Government has put in place to improve the wildlife sector.

Mr. Speaker

I beg to Move