



MINISTER BUYELWA PATIENCE SONJICA
Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs

16 July 2009

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL INTERVENTION

Dear Minister Sonjica,

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs. Animal Rights Africa (ARA) wishes you every success.

ARA is committed to the promotion of inclusive justice, showing compassion across species and building a better future in a post Apartheid South Africa. We are self-consciously located in the post-TRC South Africa of renewal and reconciliation, where our experience of prejudice, discrimination and violence enables us to empathise with the suffering of other species.

ARA is writing to you because we are extremely concerned at the sale of our national wildlife heritage by SANParks to the highest bidders and the trophy hunting industry. This is not only cruel but also an unscientific action that raises serious concerns with regards to management policies relating to national reserves and protected areas. We are concerned that SANParks may be disregarding its core mandate: protecting biodiversity, and disregarding the national and international heritage status of wildlife which has been entrusted into SANParks care on behalf of all South Africans.

South Africa is responsible for the protection of approximately 90% of the world's rhino population, however, the hunting, poaching and trade of rhinos, both illegal and legal, is once again threatening the species. Within this context, ARA is alarmed that, in spite of the fact that SANParks CEO, David Mabunda has said that it would be against the SANParks mandate to sell or allow Kruger National Park animals to be hunted, hundreds of rhino are being sold with what appears to be no checks and balances and conditions of sale which exclude hunting, and have been sold to known hunting destinations. Moreover, SANParks advertised the sale of these rhino in exclusively hunting magazines so clearly they were specifically targeting this market. SANParks seems also to be actively allowing hunters to gain access to and kill Kruger animals by promoting and allowing hunting along Kruger's ever-increasing porous borders.

Hunting for pleasure was specifically an exploitative colonial invention. It has no place in our new-found democracy and should be banned. It is thus sadly ironic and tragic that the decimation of wildlife at the hands of overseas trophy hunters is still happening with government endorsement in post-apartheid South Africa. Trophy hunting is not only an odious, inappropriate and unsound practice, both ethically and ecologically, but the trophy hunting industry is responsible for the extinction of many species across the globe.

ARA is also concerned by the government's apparent uncritical support for the vague and extremely flawed term 'sustainable use'. SANParks is under the erroneous belief that this problematic and ill-defined phrase gives them the right to treat animals like commodities and sell off and over-exploit our heritage without end and with no consultation, transparency or accountability. The analogy is a national museum stocked with unique treasures and the Curator selling these off piece by piece until the museum is empty. 'Sustainable use' in South Africa is now simply just a euphemism for unsustainable killing, suffering and massive exploitation.

Conservation is not just about protection of so-called 'natural resources' – it is just as much, if not more, about protection of the individual animals, and financing thereof is the responsibility of national government. This is why the government collects taxes. It is unethical to raise money under the guise of conservation by sacrificing wild animals in South Africa to the highest bidders for whatever purpose they have in store, including the gratuitous killing of wild animals by trophy hunters from the North.

In response to the policy and enforcement shortcomings in regard to protecting the rhino population, as well as the lack of ethically sound rhino conservation management throughout South Africa, particularly as regards the hunting of rhino, the laundering of rhino horn through the trophy hunting industry and the sale of rhino for export to facilities abroad, ARA is asking the Minister of Water and Environment Affairs to intervene by doing the following as a matter of urgency:

- Impose an immediate moratorium on all capture, sale, translocation and hunting of rhino in South Africa;
- Launch an investigation into the SANParks management process that resulted in the decision to remove this number of rhino from KNP and how SANParks decided on the buyers of these rhino, and make the findings of this investigation public;
- Convene a public consultative workshop to deal with rhino management in South Africa as the start of the legally required process of consulting with all interested and affected parties;
- Announce that the abovementioned public workshop will be step one of a public consultation and participation process that will result in National Norms and Standards for the Management of Rhino (Black and White) in South Africa (similar to that for elephant);
- Undertake a consultation process and a Parliamentary Review of the management policies in relation to the Kruger National Park and other reserves.

ARA implores you to fulfil your mandate to the people of South Africa, and ensure that SANParks does its job of protecting SA's wildlife, not killing them. We look forward to your earliest response to this very important matter.

Yours Sincerely,



Michele Pickover (Ms)
ARA Coordinator