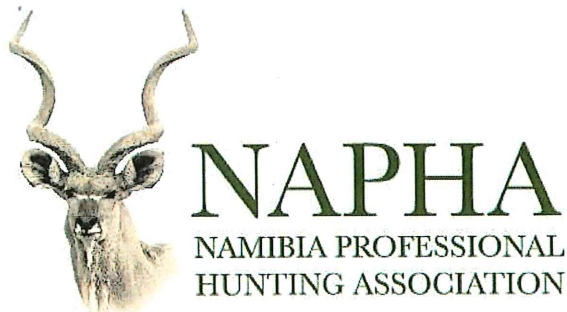




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PRESS RELEASE

Statement by the Namibia Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA) on Proposed French Import Restrictions on Hunting Trophies

The Namibia Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA) supports strong measures against illegal wildlife trade, poaching and the unsustainable use of wildlife. We share the objective of ensuring that wildlife is conserved for future generations.

We are, however, deeply concerned by proposed measures in France seeking to further restrict the importation of legally acquired hunting trophies and the promotion of conservation hunting.

Our concern extends beyond the professional hunting sector. These measures raise a fundamental question: on what scientific evidence are decisions affecting the management and economic value of African wildlife being based, and to what extent have the countries and communities responsible for conserving these species been meaningfully included in the decision-making process?

Namibia must be part of decisions concerning Namibian wildlife

Namibia is the range state.

Namibia monitors its wildlife populations, determines sustainable utilisation levels, establishes hunting quotas, combats wildlife crime and manages human-wildlife conflict. Most importantly, Namibian people live alongside the elephants, lions, leopards, rhinoceros and other wildlife that European legislation seeks to protect.

For rural communities, conservation is not an abstract principle.

Wildlife can destroy crops, kill livestock, damage infrastructure and, in some cases, threaten human life. Communities are expected to tolerate these costs because Namibia's conservation model provides mechanisms through which wildlife also generates tangible benefits.

International policy that removes these benefits without providing a viable alternative risks changing that balance.

France is sovereign in determining what may enter France. Namibia is equally sovereign in determining how Namibian wildlife should be sustainably managed. Measures adopted by importing countries should

therefore recognise the rights, expertise and conservation responsibilities of range states and should not be developed without meaningful consultation with the governments and people directly affected.

Conservation hunting produces measurable benefits

Namibia's community-based natural resource management programme is internationally recognised for placing communities at the centre of conservation.

In 2023, conservation hunting generated approximately N\$48.99 million in direct cash income and in-kind benefits within communal conservancies. Fifty-seven conservation hunting concessions supported 165 full-time and 80 part-time or seasonal jobs.

In the same year, 90,116 kg of game meat from hunting was distributed to conservancy residents, with an estimated value of approximately N\$2.43 million. This represents an important source of protein for rural communities.

These figures represent only part of the economic contribution.

Conservation hunting on freehold and communal land creates employment for professional hunters, hunting guides, trackers, skinners, camp and lodge staff, game guards and other personnel. Hunting operations purchase fuel, food, beverages, maintenance services, cleaning supplies, equipment and other goods from the wider economy.

The economic contribution continues after the hunt through taxidermists, trophy processors, freight companies and other service providers. International hunting clients also make use of hotels, restaurants, transport services and additional tourism activities during their stay.

A trophy fee therefore represents only a fraction of the economic contribution generated by an international hunter.

French hunters are directly connected to this conservation economy

France has been an important source market for conservation hunting in Namibia.

According to the available Namibian data, 230 French trophy hunters visited Namibia in 2024 and 216 in 2025. Between 2015 and 2025, the available records account for 1,823 French hunters visiting Namibia.

Between 2015 and 2025, the supplied records show only 115 CITES-listed high-value trophies exported by French nationals in the categories provided: 60 cheetah, 47 leopard and eight elephant trophies. No rhinoceros or crocodile trophies were recorded in those figures.

However, the economic impact of restrictions on these species cannot be measured by the value or number of the CITES-listed trophies alone. Hunters travelling to Namibia to hunt high-value or CITES-listed species will frequently hunt a variety of plains game species as part of the same safari. The loss of such a client therefore does not only represent the loss of, for example, a leopard or cheetah trophy fee. It may also mean the loss of several oryx, kudu, springbok, wildebeest, warthog or other plains game trophies, together with the associated daily rates and services.

French hunters predominantly hunt common game species. Available records show that species such as oryx, springbok, warthog, blue wildebeest, kudu, red hartebeest and other abundant game species make up a substantial proportion of their hunting activity.

For example, in 2025 the most frequently hunted species by French clients included 126 oryx, 74 springbok, 67 warthog, 63 blue wildebeest, 47 kudu and 44 red hartebeest.

This is important because the public debate surrounding trophy import restrictions is frequently dominated by a small number of charismatic or CITES-listed species. It does not accurately reflect the broader conservation hunting economy or the species primarily utilised by international hunters.

Restrictions aimed at a politically sensitive minority of species can therefore have consequences far beyond those individual species. They can reduce the overall economic value of a hunting safari and, in turn, the revenue generated across a much wider conservation hunting economy.

Hunting and photographic tourism are complementary, not interchangeable

NAPHA strongly supports photographic tourism. It is an essential component of Namibia's tourism and conservation economy.

We reject, however, the assumption that photographic tourism can simply replace conservation hunting throughout Namibia.

Different landscapes require different conservation models.

Many areas supporting wildlife are remote, arid, difficult to access or unsuitable for the visitor volumes required to sustain conventional photographic tourism. Low-volume, high-value conservation hunting can generate income from wildlife in areas where other forms of tourism are not economically viable.

This model also operates with a comparatively low tourism footprint. Because conservation hunting relies on a small number of visitors generating relatively high revenue per client, it does not require large visitor numbers, extensive tourism infrastructure or continuous tourist traffic to make wildlife economically valuable. This can result in a lower physical and carbon footprint while still generating income for landowners, communities, conservation activities and rural employment.

Namibia has successfully used both photographic tourism and conservation hunting as complementary mechanisms for financing conservation and maintaining wildlife habitat.

Removing one does not automatically strengthen the other.

Conservation should be judged by results

Namibia's conservation system should be evaluated according to its measurable outcomes.

Wildlife populations are monitored through mechanisms including game counts, waterhole counts, the Event Book monitoring system, patrols, road and line-transect counts and, where appropriate, aerial surveys. Professional hunting operators working in these areas also contribute observations and information concerning wildlife populations.

Revenue generated through wildlife utilisation contributes to the management of these areas, including employment, monitoring, anti-poaching activities and human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

Available population information demonstrates the scale of the wildlife resources Namibia continues to conserve. Recent estimates supplied include approximately 25,387 elephants, 11,733 leopards, 1,504 white rhinoceros, 12,073 giraffe, 3,500 hippopotamus and 44,712 Hartmann's mountain zebra.

The 2023 hunting harvest represented only approximately 0.24% of the estimated elephant population, 1.25% of leopard, 1.40% of white rhinoceros, 1.67% of giraffe, 1.40% of hippopotamus and 2.20% of Hartmann's mountain zebra. These percentages should be regarded as indicative because population estimates and harvest figures do not necessarily originate from exactly the same survey year.

Namibia's elephant population has shown a substantial long-term increase, while the country also protects one of the world's most important free-ranging black rhinoceros populations.

These conservation outcomes deserve consideration when assessing whether additional restrictions imposed by foreign governments will actually benefit wildlife.

CITES already provides an international regulatory framework

International trade in listed wildlife species is already regulated through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Where a hunt is legally authorised under Namibian law, conducted within scientifically established management systems and the resulting international trade complies with CITES requirements, additional restrictions should require a clear and demonstrable conservation justification.

The question should not simply be whether restricting trophy imports is politically popular.

The question should be whether doing so will improve conservation outcomes in the countries where these species actually occur.

If the evidence does not demonstrate that such restrictions will increase wildlife populations, improve habitat protection, reduce poaching or strengthen the livelihoods of communities living alongside wildlife, their conservation value must be questioned.

What replaces the benefits?

If France removes part of the economic value generated by Namibia's wildlife, a practical question remains:

What will replace it?

Who replaces the income received by conservancies?

Who replaces the employment?

Who replaces the protein provided through game meat?

Who contributes towards wildlife monitoring, anti-poaching activities and the management of human-wildlife conflict?

And who explains to rural communities that they must continue carrying the economic and social costs of living alongside dangerous wildlife while countries thousands of kilometres away restrict one of the mechanisms through which that wildlife provides them with benefits?

Approximately 60 Namibian communal conservancies currently benefit from conservation hunting. Some are situated in areas where photographic tourism cannot realistically provide an equivalent alternative source of income.

If wildlife ceases to provide sufficient benefits to the people who live alongside it, the incentive to conserve wildlife and maintain its habitat is weakened.

That is not a theoretical concern. It goes to the foundation of Namibia's community-based conservation model.

Our request to the French Government

NAPHA respectfully calls upon the French Government and legislators to ensure that any decisions concerning the importation of legally acquired hunting trophies are based on sound science, measurable conservation outcomes and meaningful consultation with the affected range states.

We ask France to engage directly with the Government of the Republic of Namibia, conservation authorities, communal conservancies, professional hunting organisations and other stakeholders responsible for the practical management and conservation of Namibia's wildlife.

We further ask that the socio-economic consequences of proposed restrictions be properly assessed, including their effects on rural employment, community income, food security, wildlife monitoring, anti-poaching efforts, human-wildlife conflict management and the economic viability of maintaining land for wildlife.

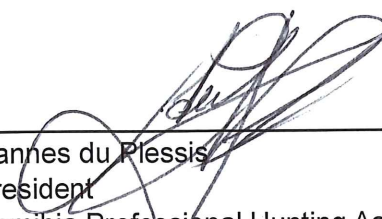
African countries should be partners in decisions concerning African conservation, not merely recipients of decisions made elsewhere.

Namibia has demonstrated that wildlife can be conserved while being sustainably utilised. Our conservation model is not without challenges, but its effectiveness should be judged by its results and improved through cooperation, science and responsible management rather than undermined through measures developed without sufficient consideration of their consequences on the ground.

NAPHA therefore respectfully urges France to reconsider measures that indiscriminately restrict legally acquired hunting trophies and instead work with Namibia and other African range states towards policies that genuinely strengthen wildlife conservation.

The objective we share is the conservation of wildlife.

The people who live with that wildlife must remain part of determining how that objective is achieved.



Hannes du Plessis
President
Namibia Professional Hunting Association