

# Southern African governments unite in opposition to UK Hunting Trophies legislation in House of Commons - London

*Senior government officials from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe protest against UK legislation to ban hunting trophy imports*

LONDON, UK, March 20, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Southern African governments unite in opposition to UK Hunting Trophies legislation in House of Commons - London

- High Commissioners, Ambassadors and senior government officials from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe met in the UK's House of Commons on Monday, March 18th to protest against proposed legislation to ban the importation of hunting trophies into the UK
- Led by the Hon. Dumezweni Mthimkhulu, Botswana's Minister for Environment and Tourism, this highly exceptional and coordinated intervention demonstrates the strength of feeling in the region against proposals that are considered unwelcome, discriminatory and colonial

London, Gaborone, Pretoria, Harare, Lusaka, Dar Es Salaam, and Windhoek, 20 March 2023: Southern African diplomatic representatives and senior government officials joined Members of Parliament, Lords and conservation scientists in the UK Parliament on Monday 18 March, to voice their opposition to the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill, a Private Member's Bill which will receive its second reading in the UK's House of Commons on Friday, March 22nd.

At the event, Southern African speakers voiced their concerns that moves by countries like the UK to restrict the trade in animal products would undermine their conservation programmes by reducing direct and indirect revenue from hunting which protects and supports the management of vast areas of land in Southern Africa.



Hon. Dumezweni Mthimkhulu, Botswana Environment Minister outside Houses of Parliament

Attendees at the meeting heard from leading conservation scientists who challenged the central premise of the Bill which claims to support conservation. Instead, they pointed out that banning trophy hunting would undermine the economic stability of local communities, leading to increased poaching and the acceleration of land conversion to agriculture or more extractive industries. They also corrected the mistaken belief held by many politicians in the Global North that trophy hunting can be replaced easily by photo-tourism: setting out multiple examples where hunting has been banned or blocks have become vacant and other forms of tourism have failed to move in owing to a lack of infrastructure and demand. Far from accelerating the decline of endangered species, most conservationists – including the UK’s own scientific advisors – agree that well-managed trophy hunting has contributed to the recovery of many species, such as the African Black Rhino, the Pakistani Markhor and the Mexican bighorn sheep.

The current Bill before Parliament is the third time legislation to ban hunting trophies has been put before Parliament and represents the second attempt to sponsor a Bill by John Spellar MP (Labour), parliamentary member for Warley in the English West Midlands. The West Midlands has been associated with heavy industry and mining since the industrial revolution, and today only 11.9% of the local population live within 500 meters of accessible woodland (1). This reflects a wider biodiversity crisis across the UK, with the number of UK animal species designated at risk of extinction rising from 8,431 in 2019 to 10,008 in 2023 (2). Mr Spellar was invited to attend the event in Parliament to hear directly from those African range states that would be impacted by the ban but declined.



High Commissioners, Ambassadors and senior African government officials at House of Commons to protest Bill to ban importation of hunting trophies



Hon Dumezweni Mthimkhulu, Botswana Environment Minister and Prof Patience Gandiwa, director Zim Parks at UK House of Commons to protest proposed ban on the importation of hunting trophies

Speaking at Monday's event in the House of Commons, Botswana Environment Minister Mthimkhulu said:

"40% of our landmass is used for wildlife conservation. We're the most successful country in the world [in terms of wildlife conservation]. If the Bill goes through, Botswana is going to take the law into its own hands [and Britain would be] damaging a relationship of 200-300 years [with Botswana]."

Professor Patience Gandiwa, Director of Transfrontier Conservation Areas for Zimbabwe Parks, said:

"We don't like it when someone wants to dictate to us how to manage our wildlife. If the Trophy Hunting (Import Prohibition) Bill passes without an amendment, it will be a slap in the face."

On the UK government's suggestion revenue lost from trophy hunting could be replaced by aid, Gandiwa responded:

"We want trade; not aid. Gone are the days that we want to be holding the begging bowl. We want to determine our own destiny for the stewardship and conservation of our wildlife heritage."

Concluding the speeches, Minister Mthimkhulu invited all Parliamentarians to visit Botswana to witness how trophy hunting is used to aid conservation.

Last week, the High Commissioners of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe wrote the foreword to a report titled 'Trophy hunting undermines conservation, right? Wrong', which included the statement: "As the vital importance of biodiversity in fighting climate change becomes ever more apparent, we are grateful for what African conservation can contribute to the planet. It may surprise those in the Global North, but ... we use trophy hunting to do it. Let us continue to do so."

(1) Woodland Trust: 'Woodland indicators by Parliamentary Constituency'; 2019

(2) UK State of Nature Report, 2023

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