

## CAMPAIGN TO BAN TROPHY HUNTING

### Press Release

For immediate release February 22, 2019

Contact: Eduardo Gonçalves 0782 682 4384 [Office.CBTH@gmail.com](mailto:Office.CBTH@gmail.com)

### **Plans to kill elephants “for pet food” strongly condemned**

The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting (CBTH) has strongly criticised proposals to allow trophy hunting of elephants to resume in Botswana, home to Africa’s largest elephant population.

The group has led international efforts to stop plans to bring back trophy hunting in the southern African nation. In October 2018, CBTH supporters including Bill Oddie and Sir Ranulph Fiennes handed in an open letter to Botswana’s High Commission signed by a group of public figures including Joanna Lumley, Stephen Fry, Ricky Gervais and Chris Packham. A global petition coordinated by CBTH was signed by 250,000 people.

A report by ministers published today recommends a lifting of the ban and also calls for the "establishment of elephant meat canning" for pet food.

Approximately 130,000 elephants - representing one-third of the world’s total remaining African elephant population - live in the country which is the size of France.

Botswana’s elephant population is twice the size of that of any other African nation, and is considered a stronghold for the species and key to its survival.

Eduardo Gonçalves, of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, said:

“African elephants are in serious trouble. Populations have crashed in recent years, and there is a real risk of the species going extinct. Allowing elephants in their last stronghold to be killed for entertainment is the last thing it needs. The proposal to kill them for pet food is beyond bizarre.

“If the trophy hunting ban is lifted, we can expect to see an increase in elephant trophies, ivory and body parts coming into Britain. The U.K. was one of Botswana’s primary markets prior to the ban. It would be a travesty if this plan led to Britain - which oridesnitself as a world leader in wildlife conservation - once more becoming a major global destination for elephant trophies.”

The vote by Botswana’s parliament to call for the resumption of elephant trophy hunting was condemned by conservationists and public figures.

In a statement, Joanna Lumley said: “I have always considered trophy hunting the lowest of the low. Killing animals for fun is just disgusting. We are urging President Masisi to reject the

proposal to lift the ban on trophy hunting for the sake of the elephants in his beautiful country and for the reputation of humans everywhere.”

Ricky Gervais also hit out strongly against the moves: “If trophy hunting elephants in Botswana is made legal again, we might as well say goodbye to them now. It will be the end for African elephants, and all because some rich psychopath enjoys murdering a magnificent animal”.

The proposal has angered leading conservationists. Bill Oddie warned that allowing trophy hunting could spell disaster: “I’m just incredulous that anyone would even think this is a good idea. Elephants are fast approaching a pre-extinction phase. They’ve disappeared from much of Africa. You’ve got small isolated groups separated from one another. Trophy hunting in the one place where they are relatively thriving could spell disaster. Botswana is the last hope for the African elephant. If we lose them here, the whole battle could be lost.”

Damian Aspinall added: "As a conservationist and as someone directly involved in working to save persecuted species, I can say from first-hand experience that hunting for 'sport' is putting tremendous pressure on our wildlife. Trophy hunting is simply inexplicable and inexcusable, and those who practice it need to take a long, hard look at themselves and what they're doing. Elephants have been with us for millions of years. Are we really going to allow them to disappear within the blink of an eye just because a handful of people take pleasure from killing them?"

Legendary explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes is another leading name to have thrown his weight behind the campaign: “Our children will despise us if we let elephants die out. We should hang our heads in shame at what’s going on. People who kill elephants for fun need to be stopped. We need a global ban and tough jail terms for trophy hunting and poaching.”

Politicians from across the political spectrum have condemned Botswana’s plans and backed a ban on trophy hunting. Sir Ed Davey MP (Lib Dem) said: “The case for legal hunting of elephants ranges from weak to immoral. Legal hunting can often act as a cover for illegal hunting, endangering the species - and the idea that tourist money trickles down to support local people who then prevent poaching simply isn’t proven. We need the ban - and we need to resource its enforcement, urgently.”

Chris Williamson MP (Labour) added: “The appalling, indiscriminate killing of elephants for their tusks is barbaric. There has been a spate of killings in Botswana, a previous safe haven for these beautiful creatures. That’s why I am calling on the Botswana Government to take action to address the slaughter of these animals without delay”.

Trophy hunting was banned in 2014 by President Ian Khama following a decline in elephant numbers in the country, since which populations have recovered. However the election of President Masisi last year has seen a push for trophy hunters to be allowed back into the country.

Botswana's parliament passed a resolution last May calling on the government to overturn the ban, a move supported by the Vice President. President Masisi launched a 'public consultation' exercise which has now concluded and recommends a resumption of hunting.

It is thought there were as many as 10 million elephants at the beginning of the 20th century. Populations in Zimbabwe have collapsed by up to 75% in some parts of the country. The population in Tanzania has crashed by 60% in the last five years, and halved in Mozambique. In Zambia - which has one of the largest groups in the 1960s - numbers have plummeted from around 200,000 to 10,000.

## Ends

### NOTES:

An open letter from celebrities and conservationists delivered to the Botswana High Commissioner in London in October condemns the proposals to resume elephant trophy hunting in Botswana. It has been signed by Bill Bailey, Nicky Campbell, Peter Egan, Ranulph Fiennes, Stephen Fry, Ricky Gervais, Joanna Lumley, Virginia McKenna, Bill Oddie, Chris Packham, Sara Pascoe and Carol Royle. It states:

"The population of elephants has plummeted in recent years, with trophy hunting and ivory poaching largely to blame. Today, one third of all African elephants in the wild are found in Botswana.

"With its population dwindling and increasingly scattered, the impact of trophy hunting could be disastrous and possibly contribute to the extinction of the species. This would be a major global conservation disaster - potentially the worst in living memory - and have tremendously damaging consequences for efforts to conserve endangered fauna and flora everywhere."

Link to 250,000-strong petition: <http://care2.com/botswanaelephants>

Data collated by the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre for the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Secretariat gives the following figures for UK elephant trophy hunting imports:

- Over the past decade (2008-17), 693 elephant trophies have been brought back into the UK by British trophy hunters.
- The trophies include elephant feet, skins, bones, ears, and tails.
- In addition, some 2 tonnes of elephant ivory have been brought into the UK by British hunters during the same period.
- In 2017 alone, there were 8 elephant ears, 1 set of bones, 4 feet, 6 skins, 1 tail, 4 tusks and 1 hunting trophy brought back to the UK from African hunting trips.

For more information about the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting visit [www.bantrophyhunting.net](http://www.bantrophyhunting.net)