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### **Former Presidents, stars and indigenous leaders launch historic coalition to abolish trophy hunting**

Hundreds of household names have joined with wildlife experts, African community leaders, the Dalai Lama and the Catholic Church to call on the UN to abolish trophy hunting, which claims tens of thousands of endangered animals every year.

A new report reveals bears, monkeys and elephants are the most popular animals shot by trophy hunters today. Giraffes, lions, hippopotamuses and leopards are highly sought-after too.

Critically endangered animals such as black rhinoceroses continue to be killed, despite IUCN data stating only 3,000 remain. Western governments continue to grant import permits to hunters, allowing them to bring horns and other trophies through customs.

Other souvenirs recorded by CITES include bear penises, giraffe feet, and elephant trunks.

There has been a 73% collapse in wildlife numbers since 1970. Hunting is often cited by and conservationists as a contributory factor to population declines.

Among the big-name backers are Alec Baldwin, Paul McCartney, Bill Maher, Priscilla Presley, Judi Dench, Ricky Gervais, Pierce Brosnan, Kate Moss, Mark Ruffalo, Michael Caine, Annie Lennox, Liam Gallagher, Bianca Jagger, Cliff Richard, Edie Falco, Daryl Hannah, James Cromwell, Hilary Swank, Brigitte Nielsen, Brian Cox, Ranulph Fiennes, Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie, Joanna Lumley, Miriam Margolyes, Kim Basinger, Alan Cumming, Bryan Adams, Sharon Osbourne, Gary Lineker, Jenson Button, and Frank Bruno.

Others include former Presidents Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico) and Ian Khama (Botswana), Shane Rodrigues - who helped his father Johnny Rodrigues reveal Walter Palmer as the killer of Cecil the lion – and former Australian and Dutch ministers who introduced trophy bans in their countries.

Environmental leaders including David Suzuki, Captain Paul Watson and Phillipe Cousteau, the son of Jacques Cousteau, a former WWF International Director, a Senior Maasai Elder, and the lawyer responsible for trophy hunting being declared unconstitutional in Colombia are backing the initiative too.

Hunters from just 12 countries account for 90% of all 'trade', with the US topping the table. Several European nations are among the leading importers of trophies. Between 80-92% of voters in these countries oppose the 'sport', however, as do 70-84% of people in Canada and South Africa - the two most popular destinations for trophy hunters.

There are approximately 20,000 lions in the wild: 10,000 lions have been shot since Cecil was killed by American dentist Walter Palmer in 2015.

Safari Club International - the largest trophy hunting group - has handed out over 300 prizes to members who have shot at least 100 different species. Some members have shot thousands of animals.

Kenya - which prohibits trophy hunting - has seen lion, elephant, rhino and giraffe populations increase in recent years. Costa Rica also forbids trophy hunting: big cat and monkey populations are thriving here too. India is another country which has outlawed the 'sport': tiger, leopard and elephant numbers here are growing.

Local communities complain they don't benefit from foreign hunters killing their wildlife - which they're forbidden to hunt even when hunger strikes. In Tanzania, the Maasai are being forcibly evicted from their land to make way for luxury hunting resorts. In Kenya, however, photo safaris contribute US \$1 billion to the economy - 15% of the country's GDP.

The abolition initiative grew out of a 2025 Wildlife & Conservation Foundation event marking the 10th anniversary of the killing of Cecil the lion. In her address, Dr Goodall told the audience: "How on earth have we allowed this to continue for so long? Trophy hunting is unconscionable."

Eduardo Goncalves of the Wildlife & Conservation Foundation (Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting) drafted the Declaration with Dr Goodall. He said: "This is about bringing an historic wrong to an end. Like the ban on whaling or the abolition of slavery, it's time to consign trophy hunting to the dustbin of history. It is an archaic practice opposed by the majority of people around the world, including North America, Europe and Africa. The abolition of trophy hunting was Jane Goodall's parting wish to the world - let us honor and fulfill her legacy."

Dr Zara Bending, Resident Expert on Wildlife Crime and International Law, The Jane Goodall Institute Global, added: "Jane Goodall was a longstanding supporter of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting. We at the Institute are committed to continuing that legacy in her name. As Dr Goodall said: 'Trophy hunting is not only cruel but it is having a negative effect on endangered and threatened wildlife. Each one of these animals is an individual, with a personality, a mind, and emotions.'"

Hollywood actor Alec Baldwin said: "I am proud to support The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting and to sign the Abolition Declaration. Trophy hunting belongs to another era. At a time when wildlife populations are declining across the globe, we should be investing in conservation, habitat protection and peaceful coexistence with nature."

Former Botswana President Seretse Khama, who banned trophy hunting when he was in office, said: "With the decline of wildlife worldwide, and many species approaching extinction, how can there be justification in trophy hunting?"

Greg Hunt, the Australian Minister who banned lion trophies in 2015, said: "Trophy hunting is inhumane, brutal, and cruel, and ultimately it's destroying part of the world's natural heritage. It enriches a few, but it does so at the cost of the broader community. It's a level of brutality that is the opposite and the enemy of conservation. To call it conservation isn't just a misnomer, it's wilful misleading."

Priscilla Presley said: "Ten years ago, the world learnt about the horrifying killing of Cecil the lion by an American dentist, Walter Palmer. Today it is learning about the terrifying scale of killing - even of endangered animals - that continues with the tacit blessing of governments. Policymakers have had 10 years since Cecil was killed to act. Now they have no more excuses."

Bishop John Arnold, the Catholic Church's Environment spokesperson (England and Wales), said: "We have a common responsibility to care for our planet. To think that animals are hunted for fun, when their death serves no other purposes than the provision of a 'trophy', is frankly offensive. Trophy hunting is cruel, meaningless, and a cowardly plundering of our animal world."

Professor Phyllis Lee, Director of Science at the Amboseli Trust for Elephants, said: "The numbers are simply appalling. This report illustrates the extent of the exploitation of threatened, and even non-threatened, species imported as trophies. Advocates for Trophy Hunting are often blind to its long-term impacts on the hunted species, especially those threatened with extinction."

Professor Fred Berkovitch, former Executive Director at Save the Giraffes, said: "Trophy hunting is an abomination masquerading as a means of 'conservation'. CITES have found that trophy hunters have killed thousands of individuals that belong to species threatened with extinction. Killing animals whose numbers are declining is antithetical to conservation."

Leading conservation scientist and EcoFlix Director Dr Ian Redmond said: "At a time when the number of wild animals has declined across the world, it is madness to allow tens of thousands of them to be killed for trophies. Trophy hunting is cruel and unethical, and does evolutionary damage to the species affected. Many of the targets are keystone species in globally important ecosystems."

South African academic Dr Ross Harvey, Director of Research at Good Governance Africa, said: "The workers on South Africa's wildlife ranches are often exploited as deeply as they were during apartheid, and perhaps even more so in some cases. Trophy hunting is the quintessential expression of a colonial endeavour. Switching in an organised fashion from trophy hunting to nature tourism could create many times more jobs in South Africa in poorer rural areas."

Dr Pieter Kat, Director of LionAid, said: "The entire premise of trophy hunting as conservation is based on a quicksand foundation of false promises. LionAid's 2025 assessment reveals an estimated total of 13,014 lions in eastern and southern Africa, and a critically low figure of 342 lions in western and central Africa. This underscores the alarming decline in lion populations and the urgent need for robust conservation measures, including the need to tackle the impact of trophy hunting".

Noma Dube of the Zimbabwe Elephant Foundation said: "Trophy hunting continues to target species that are threatened and endangered, including CITES Appendix I animals that should only be traded in "exceptional circumstances". With the majority of trophies imported by just a handful of countries, this is a policy failure, not a conservation success. Protecting wildlife means ending this trade, not managing its decline. Conservation policy must catch up with reality and end the hunting of threatened species."

Senior Maasai Elder Boniface Mpario said: "Trophy hunting is not an African tradition. The whole world needs to come together and stop these hideous acts to make sure that we do not lose species out of human greed. Western governments need to ban the importation of trophies."

Former model and activist Heather Mills said: "Trophy hunting is one of the most shocking examples of humanity treating living, feeling animals as commodities rather than the remarkable beings they are. No animal should lose its life so that someone can take home a photograph or hang a head on a

wall. Our most iconic wildlife deserves our admiration and protection, not to become trophies. The Abolition Declaration is a powerful statement that the world is ready to move beyond this outdated and cruel practice. It brings together people from every background who believe compassion, respect and conservation must come before profit and entertainment.”

Dr Winnie Kiiru, Director of Conservation Kenya, said: “As a biologist, I know first-hand that trophy hunting is not conservation. It is archaic, cruel, and it’s an elitist industry that fractures complex social structures of iconic species such as elephants and lions that are treated as mere commodities. What infuriates me is that trophy hunters target the prime individuals. They target super-tusker elephants, whose tusks are so large they practically scrape along the ground. These are now just 30-50 individuals left. Wildlife is worth more alive and protected, than dead and exported. Before the hunting ban, elephant populations in Kenya had gone down to 15,000 individuals. Now they’ve recovered to 40,000 individuals. Rhinoceros numbers went down to 400, now we have over 2,000. Kenya is now one of the strongholds for species such as rhinos.

Greg Hunt, the Australian government minister who introduced the world’s first ban on trophy imports, said: “This is the natural extension of what Australia started. Trophy hunting is inhumane, brutal and cruel, and it’s destroying part of the world’s global natural heritage. It enriches a few but does so at the expense of the wider community and the prospects of a sustainable rural economy. The people who kill those animals feel a sense of excitement, but it’s the opposite of conservation. To call it conservation is not just a misnomer but wilful misleading. Lions may roar but they can’t speak for themselves – that’s our task. This is a cause that will prevail in the end. Time matters, though, because these species are threatened. We are at a fork in the road, and this is the moment to take it.”

Dr Keith Lindsay, a Canadian evolutionary biologist and elephant expert, said: “It’s important to make a stand on this issue. There are certain voices trying to influence the debate, and if they’re the only ones heard, it will be very damaging to wildlife. The case those people are trying to make for trophy hunting is not supported by any evidence on the ground. Trophy hunting is killing animals for no good reason. The idea that it is somehow protecting wildlife habitat and generating income is a false premise. There are better ways to support conservation and promote rural development through positive means which leave the animals alive.

A new website - [www.TrophyHunters.org](http://www.TrophyHunters.org) - has been launched which gives further details of top hunters’ kill tallies and the biggest companies involved in trophy hunting.