



CABINET APPROVES REVISED POLICY POSITION ON THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF ELEPHANT, LION, LEOPARD AND RHINOCEROS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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28 March 2024 – Cabinet has approved the revised Policy Position on the conservation and sustainable use of elephant, lion, leopard, and rhinoceros for implementation.

South Africa is a country, with diverse cultures, remarkable geological wealth, and exceptional biodiversity, much of which is unique, and with high levels of endemism. With this rich endowment comes the responsibility and challenge of ensuring our species and ecosystems are conserved and used sustainably for the benefit of all South Africans and future generations.

“South Africa’s priority is to secure the survival of species in the wild. This Policy Position has been developed to clarify policy intent in respect of conservation and sustainable use of white and black rhinoceroses, lions, elephants and leopards,” said Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy.

In addition to the guidance of Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution), this Policy Position draws on a number of processes that have identified particular challenges associated with the conservation and sustainable use, and international commercial trade in these five species. These include the Rhino Committee of Inquiry (the ‘COI’), the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee Lion Colloquium (the ‘Colloquium’), the High-Level Panel Report (‘HLP’), and the White Paper on Conservation and Sustainable use of South Africa’s Biodiversity (the ‘White Paper’). Other elements of conservation and sustainable use of these species are dealt with through other mechanisms and tools.

Section 24 of the Constitution requires reasonable legislative and other measures be put in place to ensure that the environment is protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, including through promoting conservation and securing ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources. This Policy Position is one such measure, to ensure effective conservation and sustainable use of these five species.

Consistent with the policy context of the White Paper, this Policy Position focuses primarily on correcting unsustainable practices, promoting conservation, sustainable use, and the well-being of the five species, and providing policy direction for international commercial trade in the five species.

The Policy Position, therefore, proposes three conservation and sustainable use policy objectives to enhance species management:

- To end the captive keeping of lions for commercial purposes and close captive lion facilities, put a halt to the intensive breeding of lion in controlled environments, and end the commercial exploitation of captive and captive-bred lions;
- To phase out intensive management and captive breeding of rhinoceros for commercial purposes, and enhance wild populations; and
- To ensure that the use of leopard is sustainable and incentivises and enhances their conservation in the wild.

The Policy Position also proposes three international commercial trade-related policy objectives:

- To promote live export of the five species only to range states or any other appropriate and acceptable destinations with suitable habitats on the African continent;
- South Africa will work with range states and potential destination countries to support a proposal for international commercial trade in rhinoceros horn from protected wild rhinoceros, for conservation purposes, when conditions become favourable; and
- Consider international commercial elephant ivory trade only when conditions become favourable.

Each objective in this Policy Position has associated activities for implementation. By adopting practices that are responsible, legal, sustainable, and promote animal well-being, the implementation of the six Policy Objectives will transform practices within the wildlife industry that are not conducive to animal well-being and promote

conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in general, and these species in particular. This will enhance South Africa's position as a megadiverse country and leader in the conservation and sustainable use of these iconic species.

"The strategic impact of this policy position is that it will provide policy certainty for specific elements of the conservation and sustainable use of these five species, and, furthermore, provide a basis to review legislation where applicable and appropriate," said Minister Creecy.

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Source: Media Statement released by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (28 March 2024)

Click here to read the [Revised Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard, and Rhinoceros](#)