



## **KENYANS APPEAL TO FUTURE PRESIDENT TO LIFT “UNHELPFUL” INTERNATIONAL HUNTING BAN**

*By Emmanuel Koro  
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Rural and urban Kenyan citizens have appealed to the future President of Kenya to “lift the unhelpful international hunting ban” that brought an increase in wildlife poaching and missed opportunities to support wildlife conservation with international hunting revenue since it was imposed in 1977.

This is the first time that the Kenyans have spoken openly, demanding that their leaders lift the “unhelpful” international hunting ban so that wildlife and communities co-existing with it can both begin to enjoy conservation and socio-economic benefits from hunting revenue.

In a recent interview Nairobi-based economist, Mr Joseph Cheje said that he was particularly concerned about Kenya because he was seeing “quite a bit of failure on the part of the Kenyan Government” in this aspect of the missed opportunity to receive benefits from international hunting that in sharp contrast, is immensely benefiting countries in the south of the African continent. Namely, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

“We are about to get a new Government here in Kenya. We’re going into elections in August 2022,” said Mr Cheje. “Therefore, I would like to call on the new leaders to approach international hunting better than we have done in the past.”

Meanwhile, a Nairobi-based taxi driver, Mr Boniface Waweru Mwangi said the appeal to the future President of Kenya to lift the ban on international hunting “is a good idea.”

“I wish I could go there to South Africa (Southern Africa) to see how people are benefiting from international hunting,” he said.

Elsewhere, Chief Dingani Nelukoba of Dete Area (Zimbabwe) where they have an elephant overpopulation problem in Hwange District said, “Yes, I welcome the Kenyans to come and see how we’re benefiting from wildlife. It’s hurting that Kenyans aren’t benefiting from their animals. They must also benefit from their animals.”

Also in Zimbabwe, a leader from the wildlife-rich Hwange District said that he sympathizes with the Kenyans for not benefiting from international hunting.

“I am sympathizing with the Kenyans that the people whom we put in power don’t consider us in terms of our challenges,” said Mr Eliah Mutale of Hwange District who was sent to

school using international wildlife hunting revenue and graduated as a teacher. “Secondly, to these Kenyan brothers they are losing a lot because of what their government is doing to maintain the international hunting ban.”

He said that in Southern African countries, including Zimbabwe hunting is “our major treasure that is benefiting every hunting community’s wildlife conservation and socio-economic development projects.”

Speaking from the underbelly of Kenya’s failed international hunting ban where poaching has continued since the ban in 1977 and the entire rhino population has been wiped out and also where rural poverty continues, in Kasigau Rural Community - that falls under the Taita Tavoti Wildlife conservancy Association, Ms Eunice Ngali said that she was "not at all benefiting from wildlife."

“I was not aware that in Southern Africa revenue from hunted wildlife is being used to build schools,” said Ms Ngali excitedly. “It would be great if we can go on a look and learn visit to Southern African countries to find out more about their benefits from hunting. Here in Kenya, I would like to use hunting revenue to pay for our children’s bursaries.”

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Kasigau Wildlife Ranch, Mr Jonathan Manjeje questioned the Kenyan Government’s justification for “leaving a lot of buffaloes rotting in the scarcity of water.”

“The buffaloes are struggling to feed with cattle,” said Mr Manjeje. “Their grass is also exhausted. If we are overgrazing buffaloes, why don’t we reduce them by culling them? Yeah, it’s like hunting but in a way that is regularised.”

Chairman Manjeje remembers with a sense of loss that international hunting used to take place in his Kasigau Community. They used to be given game meat when he was a young boy before the 1977 hunting ban. During that time he recalled that because of the benefits of hunting and the presence of the international hunters who he described as “the white men” – rhinos used to roam freely without being poached. Sadly, they have now been wiped out by poachers following the 1977 international hunting ban.

“Whenever something is banned as we banned almost totally, international hunting and the use of wildlife here in Kenya - we lose,” said Nairobi-based Economist, Mr Chege.

“Since the banning of hunting is not stopping poaching, how about allowing it. Licensing it and regulating it. So that it is done more responsibly.

“I have it on authority that licensed hunters bring in vast sums of money. Upwards of US\$250 000.00 per person. Imagine if you had a thousand hunters in a year doing that. And this money is used to improve a lot of communities. To build schools, to finance health facilities. And bring social amenities and so on.”

Kasigau Ranch Manager, Mr Steve Mwaisaka confirmed that he has heard that “international hunting brings a lot of benefits.”

“Hunting is something very important,” said Mr Mwaisaka. “But it depends on how the regulations will be implemented to allow such a thing to happen in this country (Kenya).”

Meanwhile, Mr Joseph Cheje and Mr Mutale have warned that the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) will not be achieved if the Western animal rights and Western superpowers-influenced international hunting ban remains in Kenya, together with all forms of wildlife trade restrictions such as the international ban on ivory trade.

The people of Kenya have spoken. It remains to be seen if the future President of the East African nation will respond to the call to lift Kenya's "unhelpful" international ban on hunting that is fuelling instead of stopping poaching and rural poverty.

The country's wildlife continues to be exploited by poachers and lately Western international hunters while the Government and the communities co-existing with wildlife are receiving zero benefits from it.

According to sources who spoke on conditions of anonymity Western international hunters are have begun using private jets to fly into Kenya and hunt on privately owned game ranches and smuggle the trophies back to Europe.

"In Kenya, there are double standards by these so-called animal rights advocacy groups," said Mr Mutale, reacting to this new and sad development. "You're finding that the Westerners, they are coming secretly in their private jets and hunting on private lands. And that is depriving the Government of hunting revenue."

**About the writer:** Emmanuel Koro is a Johannesburg-based international award-winning environmental journalist who writes independently on environment and development issues in Africa and the author of the book: *Western Celebration of African Poverty – Animal Rights Versus Human Rights*.