9th July 2018

RE: LION CONSERVATION AND TROPHY IMPORTS.

Thank you for contacting me recently about the conservation of lions in Africa; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

I entirely agree with you that lions are an iconic species that deserve our best protection, and I am glad that the UK Government is committed to conserving the world's wildlife.

The killing of the Zimbabwean lion known as ‘Cecil’ was a particularly distressing case. The Government wrote to its counterparts in Zimbabwe to call for our two countries to work together to promote lion conservation.

I know there have been serious concerns raised about African lion hunting trophy imports. The wildlife trade is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, whose approach is to ensure that the trade is conducted legally and sustainably, not necessarily to reduce or end it. At its most recent conference, the UK played a key role in developing a proposal for enhanced global rules on hunting and trade. The resulting tightening of controls are a very positive step towards ensuring sustainability.

Import controls are managed at an EU-wide level and stricter controls on the import of six species subject to hunting, including lions and African elephants, were introduced in 2015. Following our withdrawal from the European Union, the Government will be in a position to consider future UK policy in this area.

Properly managed, legal and sustainable trophy hunting can play a part in species conservation efforts, providing an important source of funding for conservation in some countries.

As part of its efforts to tackle the illegal wildlife trade, the UK will host a fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife trade in October 2018, building on previous conferences held in London, Kasane, and Hanoi. It has also set up the £13 million Illegal Wildlife Challenge Fund to support projects in the developing world, and in 2012, funded a conference in Johannesburg to consider the conservation of the African lion with other interested countries.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

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