

Botswana should be praised for its conservation efforts, not chastised by Germany

Issued by [North-West University \(NWU\)](#)

5 Apr 2024

Germany's proposed ban on the import of hunting trophies over poaching concerns has drawn the ire of Botswana's President, Mokgweetsi Masisi. Botswana is home to the world's largest elephant population, which has grown to more than 130,000.



Prof Peet van der Merwe

Marauding elephant herds wreak havoc on local crops, properties and are endangering the lives of the country's citizens, and President Masisi says that hunting is one way to stem the destructive tide.

However, Germany's environment ministry has called for stricter rules on the import of hunting trophies, to which President Masisi vowed to send 20,000 elephants to Germany. Botswana has already given 8,000 elephants to Angola and has promised about 500 to Mozambique.

Prof Peet van der Merwe from the research unit for Tourism Research in Economics, Environs and Society (TREES) at the

North-West University (NWU) in South Africa, says that the continent's conservation should be left in local hands.

"I completely agree with President Masisi's stance on how Botswana wants to manage wildlife, especially elephants. Africa must take ownership of its own wildlife. I think it is time that Germany and other countries stop telling us how to manage our wildlife. It is our wildlife, and we know the best way to do it," Van der Merwe explained.

"Botswana has a very good conservation management system and model, and they have proved over the years how effectively and sustainably they can manage their wildlife. Hunting is one of the tools you can use to manage wildlife sustainably. There are many poverty-stricken communities in Botswana. If they can't plant or harvest crops due to elephant populations destroying their crops, what are they to do? How will they survive? Hunting generates a lot of income for local, impoverished communities. That money can be used to uplift those communities and there can be investments in those communities," he added.

"Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, to name but a few, all have very good conservation management strategies. We have healthy wildlife populations and we have proven that we can manage them sustainably."

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