



## **Per Electronic Communication**

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## **Concern that Stellenbosch University is adopting a dangerous one-sided approach to wildlife conservation**

The members of WAPFSA<sup>1</sup> are concerned that Stellenbosch University is closely aligning itself with a US based trophy hunting advocacy organisation – Safari Club International (SCI).

Stellenbosch University appears to be adopting a one-sided policy on ramping up the commercialisation and consumptive use of wildlife by actively collaborating with Safari Club International (SCI), the world's largest trophy hunting organisation.

The annual African Wildlife Consultative Forum (AWCF) is SCI Foundation's premier activity in Africa. The annual meeting, which is facilitated by Stellenbosch University's African Wildlife Economy Institute (AWEI) brings together professional hunting associations, hunting and conservation organisations, and range state government officials. The meeting will take place in Stellenbosch from 28 Oct - 1 Nov 2024.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Wildlife Animal Protection Forum of South Africa](#) (WAPFSA) is a national network of 30 South African organizations that was explicitly set up and designed as a vehicle to engage with government on wildlife issues and to put wild animals onto the political agenda, based on ethical and compassionate conservation and harmonious coexistence within nature.

Our members share clearly articulated principles that are part of our Founding Document, initiated in 2016. Our common goal is to safeguard and protect wild animals and their welfare and well-being, as well as biodiversity, individual species, individual animals and the interests of vulnerable people.

All our activities are underpinned by an understanding that the inter-relationship between environmental protection, animal well-being, conservation and the values of dignity, compassion and humaneness are foundational to our constitutional democracy, a position which has been recognised in South African jurisprudence. We also advocate for the concepts of UBUNTU, the intrinsic value of wild animals and an integrative policy approach, which requires the adoption of an attitude of respect to the individuals that make up a species, an eco-system or the components of biodiversity.

Key to WAPFSA's activities is the understanding that there is an urgent need to reimagine human-animal relations and that animal welfare and climate change are intertwined.

Our members include other large networks and movements, for example The Climate Justice Charter Movement. The WAPFSA members span various areas of expertise, including: advocacy; education; Rights, Welfare, Conservation and Faith based approaches; species specialists; rescue and rehabilitation; legal and litigation; research; investigation; conflict mitigation and mediation; food sovereignty; community support and engagement; and indigenous knowledge.

The discussions are to centre on the ramping up wildlife economies in Africa – and particularly southern Africa. While the promotion and expansion of trophy hunting activities will be the primary focus, the meeting aims to lend support to the increase in monetising wildlife utilisation. Trophy hunting and trade in wildlife body parts such as ivory and rhino horn are regarded as key to the expansion of such economies.

Of concern, is that the discussions are held in private with approximately a dozen southern African governments attending. That these talks are shrouded in secrecy means that the approach by SCI and AWEI are designed to influence government policy without the attendance of other organisations that hold a different approach to wildlife conservation.

The meeting is scheduled just ahead of the AWEI's own colloquium to be held at Stellenbosch University from the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> November, which also seeks to expand the consumption of wildlife and ramp up efforts to extract more from the continent's biodiversity.

However, this comes amid dire warnings that human exploitation of wildlife has pushed wild species to the brink extinction. According to the latest Living Planet Report (2024) there has been an average 76% decline in Africa's wildlife populations since 1970. The report warns that we are approaching dangerous tipping points that pose grave threats to the natural world and humanity.

Not only do such policies threaten the survival of species but also the livelihoods and well-being of human communities living alongside wildlife. Economic policies of wildlife, long favoured by SCI and AWEI and adopted by most southern African governments since 1970, have been found to exploit and subjugate rural communities with false promises of financial income and other benefits. Over the past 50 years of such policies, these communities remain the poorest and most economically disenfranchised in Africa.

The Living Planet Report further states that “a huge collective effort will be required over the next five years to tackle the dual climate and nature crises.”

However, it appears that Stellenbosch University is ignoring such calls and is forging ahead with biased consumptive-use policies that have done little to address the decline in wildlife and community upliftment. This is a dangerous precedent that will almost certainly result in crossing those tipping points.

As a world-class academic institution, Stellenbosch University ought to be rigorously examining all sides of wildlife conservation and, in particular, to fundamentally address the rapid decline in wildlife and natural spaces as well as the well-being of rural communities. That they are attending closed-door meetings with government officials and SCI to effect policy without the broad spectrum of stakeholders in the conservation arena shows a lack of essential impartiality.

WAPFSA therefore calls upon Stellenbosch University not to host the African Wildlife Consultative Forum (AWCF).

WAPFSA looks forward to your urgent response.

Yours sincerely,



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On behalf of the following members of WAPSA:

Michele Pickover Executive Director **EMS Foundation**  
Megan Carr Founder **Rhinos in Africa**  
Ross Harvey Director of Research and Programmes at **Good Governance Africa**  
Cormac Cullinan Founder **Wild Law Institute**  
Chad Cupido Executive Officer **Beauty Without Cruelty**  
Vishwas Satgar Founder and Chair **Co-Operative and Policy Alternative Centre**  
Charles Simane **Communications Climate Justice Charter Movement**  
Wynter Worsthorne Founder **Animal Talk Africa**  
Stefania Falcon Founder **Future for Wildlife**  
Luana Pasanisi Founder **Green Group Simonstown**  
Guy Jennings Consultant **Wild Africa Fund Southern Africa**  
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Vivien Law Founder **Ancient Earth Farm**  
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Pete Oxford and Rene Bisch Founders **Betty's Bay Baboon Action Group**  
Cora Bailey Founder **Community Led Animal Welfare**  
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Steve Smit Co-Founder **Monkey Helpline**  
Liz Cornwall and Catherine Nyquist Co-Founders **Panthera Africa Big Cat Sanctuary**  
Lex Abnett Director **Southern African Fight for Rhinos**  
Dave Du Toit Founder **Vervet Monkey Foundation**



**RHINOS  
IN AFRICA**

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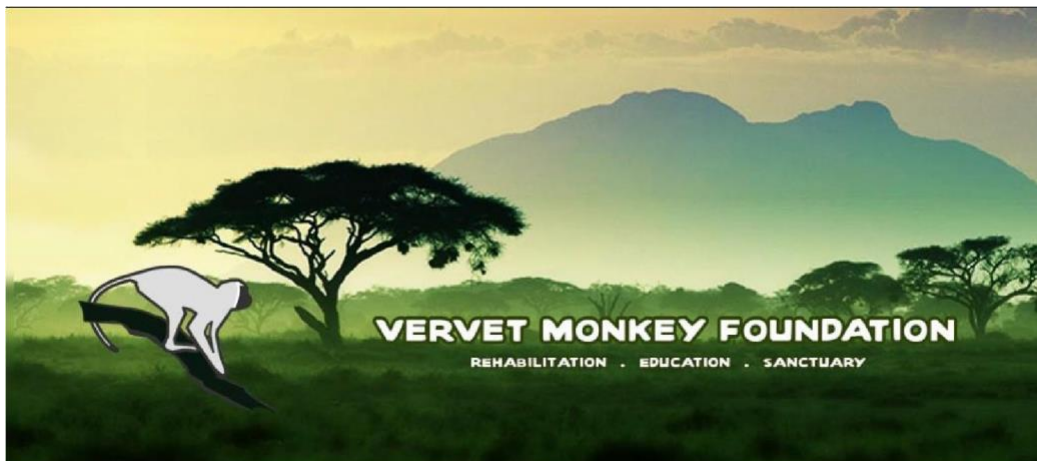
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