

TELEGRAMS: PULA
TELEPHONE: 3950800
TELEX: 2655 BD



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
PRIVATE BAG 001
GABORONE

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PRESS RELEASE

BOTSWANA'S CONTROLLED HUNTING PROGRAMME WILL WITHSTAND THE ATTACKS OF SELF-SERVING INDIVIDUALS AS IT BENEFITS LOCAL COMMUNITIES: TELLING THE TRUTH AS IT IS!

1. The public is informed that the Government of Botswana is aware of a misinformed video interview circulating in the media, through the animal rights ***MojoStreamingwebsite***, which was given by the British Conservative party MP Sir Roger Gale, purportedly to offer comment on the desirability and effectiveness of the use of "Controlled Hunting" as part of a conservation strategy.
2. While Sir Gale is entitled to his opinions on conservation strategies, and is decidedly against the practice of controlled hunting, he does not have license to go on the rampage with disinformation aimed at undermining Botswana's very pragmatic, and sustainable conservation policy and practices. The truth about Botswana shall not give way to falsehoods!
3. Regrettably, instead of fair comment to assess and evaluate the impact of the now almost three years old sovereign and democratic decision of 23 May 2019, for the **"lifting of the hunting ban"** in Botswana **to manage human-wildlife conflict**, the interview given by Sir Gale degenerated into a smear campaign aimed at discrediting the visionary and good leadership of His Excellency, Dr. Mokgweetsi E.K. Masisi, the President of the Republic of Botswana. This was and is a veiled attack on the Botswana State.
4. The suggestion that the President has a personal interest of financial gain in "the controlled hunting" is not only blatantly untrue, but also reveals ignorance about the rigorous processes through which hunting licenses and quotas are allocated. What exposes even more the web of untruths that were spewed by Sir Gale is the

notion that President Masisi ascended to the highest office in the land by "ousting" his predecessor. Yet, presidential succession in Botswana is constitutionally determined, and the truth is that President Dr Masisi was duly elected the President of Botswana in the General Elections of October 2019. Any assertion to the contrary is, indeed, mischievous and mere fantasy with an ulterior motive only known by the fertile mind that has conceived it.

5. We wish to state also that it is utter falsehood and disinformation for Sir Gale to characterise controlled permission to hunt animals as "murdering", and, in the same breadth also attribute the description of "murderer" and "vandal" to Botswana's Head of State. Such a frivolous, irresponsible and emotive use of language to attack the integrity of the Botswana Government's sovereign decision-making, is an act of deliberate abuse of the power of mass communication to hide the real special interests of photo journalism behind the disinformation.
6. For the record and proper education of any individuals who may believe in the unscientific opinions and accusations propagated by Sir Gales, reference is made to a three-pages long "Media Statement" that was issued to all Media Houses in Botswana on the 23rd February 2020, by the then Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism. It was entitled: *"Botswana controlled hunting programme: A sustainable, science-based conservation strategy to benefit and empower communities."*
7. Among several justifications for controlled hunting is the following: "The decision to lift the hunting moratorium was made in the best interest of aiding rural community livelihoods, stemming the rise of human-elephant conflict and incentivizing local communities to support sustainable-use conservation and tourism."
8. In conclusion, the Government of Botswana wishes to strongly condemn anyone who trivialises the concerns about wildlife and natural resources conservation, and the promoting sustainable livelihoods of communities in Botswana, through peddling falsehoods regarding the choices that Botswana have made.



William Kemotho Sentsheheng

**DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY
GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS**