

Media Release – 11 March 2000

Kruger Elephant Cull Denied

The South African National Parks (SANP) has poured cold water on a sensational and misleading report in the Mail and Guardian that 1000 elephants will be culled next year. According to Mavuso Msimang the Chief Executive of SANP "no decision has been taken to kill any elephants in the Kruger National Park".

At a media briefing in Midrand last Monday, hosted by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa the press and diplomats were lectured on the outlines of the new management plan for the Kruger National Park, and in particular how it was envisaged elephants would be managed in the future. The plan was outlined by Mr Ian Whyte of the SANP scientific staff based in Skukuza. He indicated clearly that the plan would result in a massive increase in the elephant population from just over 9000 at present to nearly 20 000 in the next two decades.

"While the removal of elephants from designated zones within the park was discussed, no mention was made of a resumption of killing of elephants next year as claimed by the M&G says Dr Anthony Hall-Martin, Director of Conservation Development of SANP. "Mr Whyte in fact emphasised that alternatives to killing animals, such as translocation would first be pursued before any resumption of killing". It is widely accepted that contraception, on the basis of current knowledge, is unlikely to be an immediately available option for managing a large elephant population. The removal of live animals from the KNP as a population control mechanism will be exhausted before a decision is taken for the culling option.

"The Eastern Cape is currently preparing to take 50-100 animals for its 40 000 ha Fish River Complex" says Msimang. " This will go some way towards immediate relief for the sensitive botanical reserves in the north and south of the park". Msimang furthermore pointed out that South Africa's proposal to CITES to allow a downlisting of our elephants includes an important element which is approval for the sale of live elephants to other countries for conservation purposes. "The opportunity to give Transfrontier Conservation between South Africa and Mozambique a boost by the restocking of war-ravaged areas of Mozambique with thousands of elephants in an opportunity that must not be missed" said Minister M. Valli Moosa at the briefing. The Mail and Guardian also ran a critical article on the capacity of the South African authorities to police the illegal trade in animals, surreptitiously linking these concerns to the ivory proposal to CITES. The Minister has emphasised, however, that the South African proposal to be debated at the April CITES meeting deals only with elephants and with a one-off sale of stockpiled ivory to Japan, as well as the sale of elephant hide. It will not open the market to any traders or middlemen, and will not create opportunities for illegally obtained ivory to find its way into the SANP sale.

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