

Response from The Coalition "To Stop the Captive Breeding and Keeping of Lions and other Big Cats for Commercial Purposes" to SATSA Animal Interaction Workshops.

28 March 2019

To: Keira Powers, Chair Board Committee on Animal Interaction, SATSA  
Lee-Anne Bac, BDO

Sent via email to [keira@spiritofafrica.co.za](mailto:keira@spiritofafrica.co.za) and [Lbac@bdo.co.za](mailto:Lbac@bdo.co.za)

Dear Keira and Lee-Ann

We thank SATSA and BDO for organising the recent consultative workshops on animal interaction and the presentation of the initial findings from your research. Many members of our Coalition\* were able to attend some of these workshops and we would like to take the opportunity to give you some constructive feedback and some of our thoughts.

As you know, there is a growing and loud call from inside and outside South Africa to set industry-wide standards that are clear and transparent. These should be norms and standard to which organisations can be held accountable and must adhere to on captive wildlife interaction. There are many concerns around the captive breeding of indigenous and exotic wild animals and their use in the tourism industry, such as cruelty, unnatural behaviour, unsuitable conditions, disease, distress, safety of persons involved and the fact there is absolutely no conservation value to this industry and thus these animals are being used purely for entertainment and commercial gain.

SA Tourism have already stated that they "do not promote or endorse any interactions with wild animals such as petting". Indeed, Mr Derek Hanekom (Minister of Tourism) has questioned these activities in the past, "is this something that we feel proud of as a nation? My feeling is: I'm not proud of it. I think we should consider stronger measures to control if not to ban the breeding of lions in captivity, because we simply don't need it in terms of our conservation effort."

Mr Philemon Mapulane (Chair Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs) stated during a two-day Parliamentary Colloquium on the Captive Lion Breeding Industry in August 2018 that "South Africa is allowing a practice that everybody is turning their backs to, we need to find a solution as a country to improve the situation".

Recently in a Southern and Eastern African Tourism Update it was noted that "While travel and tourism in Africa is forging ahead, South Africa may become the fastest shrinking tourism market over the next year". In addition, Martin Wiest (CEO Tourvest Destination Management) was quoted recently as saying "the anticipated decline in 2019 will be somewhere between 15% and 25%".

A report by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) concluded that South Africa's tourism brand value could potentially be negatively affected by as much as ZAR54 billion loss in revenue over the next decade, if the captive lion breeding industry is allowed to continue.

There is also a global shift in traveller's attitudes towards wildlife interactions. In a survey carried out by OnePoll on behalf of Exodus Travel, 75% of respondents said they want tour companies to have responsible wildlife policies. Twenty-one percent of respondents put posing for photographs with captive wildlife on their list of unethical

activities they wouldn't do again, 18% had regrets about riding on elephants, and 19% regretted swimming with dolphins.

In 2017, Instagram created an alert system to remove images with certain hashtags, to cut down on the wildlife selfies being shared on the social network. That same year, Expedia announced that they would no longer offer certain animal activities.

There has never been a more crucial time to restore consumer confidence in travelling to South Africa, whether that be the cost of travel, the constant international news on the issues facing South Africans' daily lives, or the international outcry around issues concerning the breeding of wildlife in captivity for human entertainment. All of these are disconcerting to potential tourists.

SATSA and SA Tourism really need to convey that they are leading the charge to restore this consumer confidence, particularly around the topic of human entertainment involving captive bred wildlife for commercial gain. With global corporations such as TripAdvisor, Instagram and Expedia, under pressure to stop promoting or selling animal interactions from tourists themselves, should see this as further motivation for strict guidelines and accreditation. It is now more important than ever that Brand SA does not continue to be damaged by these matters.

We fully appreciate the need for your regional consultation workshops in an effort to take input from all sides of the industry. However, we do not believe that this democratic process will be able to guide SATSA to your final destination, as your decisions should be firmly based on facts and science concerning issues such as animal welfare, reputational damage, and (lack of) conservation. "Pressure from either side to conform to their passionately held views", as SATSA put it in a statement on social media, should not be part of this decision-making process.

We fully support the idea of the creation of industry-wide guidelines with regard to wildlife interaction and in this particular case, for SATSA members, if these will:

- aid in the welfare and protection for all captive wild animal species involved in this industry;
- be based on facts and science rather than opinions to suit a particular narrative;
- involve an audited process rather than self-assessment, as the latter is extremely unlikely to work. In a recent presentation by DEA for the Portfolio Committee of Environmental Affairs, DEA admitted that 40% of the inspected captive wildlife breeders and facilities were non-compliant with among others the Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations and many were also found to be operating with expired permits. If legislation is ignored, self-assessment of industry norms and standards will most certainly be violated;
- give assurance that facilities offering these activities are to be monitored;
- give assurance that SATSA members, who do not adhere to these guidelines will face some kind of "penalty", i.e. removal as SATSA members.

We support the inclusion of guidelines already created and used by the likes of ABTA, ANVR and the advice from World Animal Protection, as a good starting point. Although, the ANVR guidelines are going through a process of revision with only a handful of NGOs invited to participate in this revision, including HSI Africa who are part of our Coalition. We fully support their strict and clear guidelines that do not allow for any interactions, such as petting, feeding, walking etc, and this view was shared by the other contributors.

It was clear from the workshops that the meaning of terms such as *interaction* and *ethical* will need to be clearly defined in these guidelines. It is also apparent that both the tourism industry and visitors are confused as to what is acceptable and what isn't. A

complete ban on any form of interaction, including more “hands-off” activities such as walking and performances, would create simplicity and clarity in a confusing and blurry landscape.

SATSA will also need to feed into and work with Government departments to make sure the guidelines will be approved and adopted at every level.

We believe the initiation of these guidelines from SATSA could be a crucial step forward in garnering the renewed trust of visitors to South Africa. We look forward to receiving the workshop follow-up questionnaire and the draft guidelines as soon as these are available, so we can continue to work with you to assist in the creation of a set of guidelines that provide the best possible outcome for all.

*\* The Coalition to Stop Captive Breeding and Keeping of Lions and Other Big Cats for Commercial Purposes (the Coalition) is an alliance of diverse organisations and individuals, who share certain values, knowledge and objectives, and collectively comprise a respected body of expertise from scientific, conservation, legal, faith and public advocacy sectors. The main purpose and objective of the Coalition are:*

- 1. to enable its members to work together in order to stop captive breeding and keeping of lions and other big cats for exploitative purposes.*
- 2. to facilitate the creation of a strong social movement that advocates locally and globally to create awareness about, and to ultimately end, captive predator breeding and keeping of lions and other big cats for exploitative purposes.*

**Signed by:-**



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