



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND MARINE RESOURCES

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13 November 2007

Honourable Gerda Verburg
 Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
 The Hague
 Netherlands

Dear Honourable Verburg

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 8th October 2007, requesting Namibia to initiate discussions with relevant fisheries entities and to come up with appropriate measures aimed at finding more humane harvesting methods for seals.

Hon. Minister, seals harvesting in Namibia is conducted in line with the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, Article 95 that calls for sustainable harvesting of the country's resources. The level of harvesting takes into account available scientific data. The Ministry has developed a program to monitor and assess the level of stocks and the healthiness of the ecosystem. Our scientific personnel undertake rigorous surveys and counting of seals in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZs) in line with international standards. According to our surveys of 2000, there are around 650 000 adults seals and 120 000 pups (born December 2006).

The concern in your letter is on "humaneness" of harvesting of pups (small seals). This method involves clubbing the pups on the head. This is, however, the only method that is universally used. With respect to adult seals, extensive research have been conducted and have revealed that shooting is the most appropriate method as it result in instant death of adult seals. It is a fact that for human kind to utilize animals for food and for overall economic reasons there is at times a need to kill them.

It is worth mentioning that we have in the past and continue to extend invitation to animal conservation entities to recommend any alternative method that we may consider for harvesting. This invitation was extended to both national and international animal conservation groups back in 2000, but up to now no one came up with an alternative

method. This literally means there is no alternative method to harvesting seals other than the one we are currently using.

Seals harvesting is an economic activity in Namibia, which sustains direct jobs of the unemployed, poor and destitute Namibians, especially the rural poor, women, and children. Therefore, stopping the exploitation of this sustainability managed resources is not an option, rather than coming up with a viable harvesting method of sustaining that niche in the Namibian economy.

I trust that this information would assist, the Honourable Minister, to understand Namibia's Sealing Policy.

Yours sincerely,


Dr. Abram Iyambo
MINISTER