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## Seals are an economic resource

**25 Apr 2012****By Dr Ngarikutuke Tjiriange**

THE STRUGGLE for the national independence of our country was not only to liberate us from colonial oppression and hosting of the flag of independent Namibia. In addition to liberating our people from oppression, we fully understand that political emancipation is meaningless without promoting their economic wellbeing.

In order for us to liberate our people from poverty and improve their standard of living, we have to place in place to help the government achieve the economic wellbeing of our people.

Namibia's economy is heavily dependent on its national resources. Many of our people, if not all of them, are directly dependent upon the environment and living natural resources for their livelihoods. Because we have recognized the importance of interrelationships between the environment, particularly the living natural resources, for human survival. Therefore, we are committed to the protection of Namibia's environment and promoting the economic wellbeing of all its inhabitants – both present and silent generations.

We shall never have a policy which will not have sound environmental planning and which will be detrimental to the holistic protection of our natural resources – be it flora or fauna. Key issues of environmental management and natural resources are and will always be considered in our economic development and natural preservation. Our responsibility includes the creation of sound policy to ensure that the whole of the society is responsible for and committed to the protection and use of both renewable and non-renewable natural resources of our country.

The government therefore fully understands the importance of sustainable use of Namibia's natural resources and maintenance of ecologically viable supporting ecosystems.

The ruling party and its government are committed as per article 95 of the Namibian constitution to the promotion and maintenance of the welfare of the people by adopting policies aimed at the maintenance of ecosystems, essential ecological processes and biological diversity of Namibia – and utilization of its natural resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future.

Our natural resources must help the country to develop the economy and alleviate poverty among its people. Therefore, the principle of achieving and maintaining development has always underpinned all policy programmes and projects undertaken within Namibia, in this regard particularly the wise utilization of our country's natural resources, together with the responsible management of the biophysical environment to the benefit of present and future generations to come.

We have undertaken and always are maintaining biological diversity and promoting the conservation of the habitats of all species of fauna and flora, in particular those which are endemic, threatened, and of high economic, cultural, educational, scientific and conservation interest. These include the sustainable management and harvesting of the seals in our waters.

Seals are also resources like any other resources that ought to be managed, controlled and harvested to support the economic development of the country.

The fauna of the country include all the living animals on the land and in the waters of the country. It is our responsibility to make sure that these animals are properly and scientifically taken care of so that they add economic value to the country and its people. Seals are not an exception in this regard.

Like fish, proper control, management and harvest of the seals is of vital importance to the Namibian economy. We cannot allow our seals to be over-harvested, neither shall we allow them to stay in our waters without controlling their numbers. This we do with all the fauna in the country. The seals indeed eat fish and if they are not controlled, they may become a problem with time.

Therefore, when the numbers allow, the seals must be harvested and benefit the country and its people. However, there are some people who are against the way the government of Namibia is harvesting seals as an economic resource, i.e. the seals. Noises are made about the killing of the seals in our country. Yes, we understand that killing seals by beating them with sticks may not be really the appropriate and scientific way to cull them. It might be considered cruel, but let us put heads together and find an appropriate method rather than saying that there should not be seal harvesting in Namibia.

We have to benefit our people from seal products. To do so, we have to harvest them first and how do we do that without being seen to be cruel?



This issue is not only difficult but morally and humanely challenging. It is therefore unfortunate for some organizations to think that they are more concerned than the government. We all find ourselves in a similar situation.

Let me in this regard try to look at this issue soberly and sensibly. The harvesting of the seals as an economic resource must surely be carried out by all means, difficulties notwithstanding.

Therefore, I am afraid to say that the stand taken by the representatives of the so-called Seal Alert Namibia and Sea Shepherd South Africa has no basis and can be considered opportunistic, to say the least unless I misunderstand them.

While I am against cruelty to animals, I do not agree with those who are calling for the boycotting of seal products just because of what they perceive to be inhumane killings of seals in Namibia.

In this regard, I have difficulty to see and understand what is humane killing and what is inhumane killing.

Fish is taken out of the water and deprived of oxygen that makes it to suffocate and as a result, it is then processed and eaten, cattle are shot and killed, goats and sheep are killed with sharp objects, chickens are beheaded, those countries that are still having death penalties are executing people either by hanging them or by firing squad - are these supposed to be humane killings?

Every killing comes with pain, method of that killing notwithstanding. I do not know of any humane killing because in most cases whenever you kill some animal or someone, that victim feels the pain. Therefore, the killing can then be perceived to be inhumane. Of course, some methods of killing are abrupt while others are gradual but the end result is that such a particular animal is being killed. Just imagine someone being deprived of oxygen or hanging such a person. Can you say that such a killing is humane? Or you shoot someone with a bullet because he is sentenced to death. Can you say it is human to shoot the kudu but is inhumane to shoot another animal?

I wonder whether the representatives of these bodies, that is Seal Alert etc., eat meat, fish or chicken and pretend that the killing of the cattle, chicken and fish is human that is why they are eating the meat, chicken.

If any animal is killed by being beaten on the head with a stick and another is killed by cutting the throat with a knife or shooting in the head, all these animals have died. You cannot say that the one which was killed by beating is more dead than the one which was shot in the head.

There is no humane or inhumane killing. If the method of killing seals is not acceptable to the representatives of the abovementioned bodies, let them suggest a method of killing which is acceptable to them and which is perceived as being humane, rather than saying that Namibia should not harvest the seals.

Although the method of killing the seals may not be acceptable to be the best one, with due respect to other animals like cattle, goats, sheep, chicken, fish etc. should be made available to the economy of the country. Let Seal Alert etc. come up with the method of killing that is acceptable to them. I am afraid tomorrow people will come with the complaint that we should close abattoirs because the killing of cattle is inhumane and one should shoot a kudu because it is inhumane.

As I said earlier, I do not know of any killing which is humane, let us simply then stop killing any animal and such killing notwithstanding.

It is for these reasons that I totally agree with Mr Oswald Theart of the National Seal Conservation Commission that the government should ignore activists of the Seal Alert and Seal of Namibia and Sea Shepherd South Africa when they come out clearly with a suggestion as to what they consider to be the humane killing of seals. We cannot have national resources such as seals which cannot be harvested and benefit the country just because there are some people who are too selective and sentimental when it comes to killing animals that they condone the killing of other animals.

Why do they not stop some countries, including some states in the US, from executing criminals? Is the methods used there to execute criminals are humane?

I am sure the representatives of the Seal Alert and Seals of Namibia and Shepherd South Africa are wearing shoes that are made out of animal leather or tie their clothes with belts made of leather of animals. How can they say that animals from which those skins were removed killed in a humane manner, just because they were killed with a stick?

I hope they also boycott putting on shoes that are made from animal leather because killing is just killing.

To eat meat, chicken or fish which was slaughtered in one way or the other or put on shoes and belts made from skins removed from killed animals and then pretend that they are more concerned about the hypocrisy of the highest order.

What we have to try and do is to come up with viable and economically sound solutions as to how to manage the seal resource.

seal products, meat of seals included, to have these resources contribute to our national economy wellbeing of the people, instead of advocating for boycotting our seal products.

If seal meat has been for many years consumed by other people in the world such as in Canada, w a way as to how best we can improve upon the methods of harvesting our seals which will enable t those markets and make economic sense, while complying with or coming up with new health regul will be acceptable to both Namibia and the countries to which we intend to export our products.

Organizations such as Seals of Namibia are quoted as saying that seals are “apex predators - their contains extremely high levels of mercury which is known to cause Minimatas disease and other to metals such as cadmium and lead are also present in the seal meat blubber”.

Be that as it may, some of the countries where people consume seal meat are more developed and than Namibia and are surely aware of these facts and that should not be the reason for any organi prevent Namibia from exporting seal products including seal meat to wherever and call for a boyc Namibia’s seal products.

In addition to finding export markets for seal meat, we can also continue to utilize seal meat for pet also use the seal bones and seal meat meal for fertilizers and animal fodder, and together with imp countries find an amicable and suitable way of getting into this business.

We cannot pressurize other countries to import our seal meat even if we wanted to, but if such cou reason or another are interested in importing our seal meat and other seal products, why should ar organization prevent Namibia from exporting such meat and products to such countries, as long as set health standards which are acceptable to the importing countries.


Why should we be presumptuous and question the judgment of other countries if such countries fe want our seal products including seal meat? As I said earlier, some of such countries may even be advanced than Namibia and they surely know why they are allowing such imports in their countries

As much as we have 24 seal colonies along our coast, we can find a suitable way through proper r how we can harvest this product and make harvesting and selling seal products a viable economic for our country and its people.

If the organizations that are concerned with seal harvesting in Namibia are patriotic, let them sugge economically viable and appropriate ways of harvesting this resource instead of advocating blindly seal products from our country, and presuming that those countries that might be interested in our s and meat are irresponsible and do not know the consequences of importing these things from Nam


I am making all these examples just to illustrate the fact that it is always easy to make a noise but n come with acceptable and proper alternatives to the problems.

In conclusion, as I have said earlier, and with due respect, let those who are opposed to seal harve Namibia come up with a scientific solution to the problem and suggest a way forward – instead of s seals should not be harvested as economic resources – and benefit the economy of this country ar think Seal Alert and Seal of Namibia and Shepherd South Africa have a hidden agenda, maybe get by making noise about seals.




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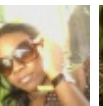
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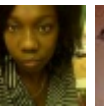
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