

SUSTAINABLE HUNTING TOURISM POSITION PAPER OF THE CIC TROPICAL GAME COMMISSION



(1)

Sustainable use of nature is a binding principle which has been accepted worldwide as being effective for the protection and management of natural resources and biological diversity.

This concept – which has been used in German forestry for over 200 years – was adopted in 1992 by the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* in Rio as a general principle for humans to interact with the natural resources on earth. It implies that the use of components of biodiversity should not lead to its gradual decline.

The parent organization of international environmental and biodiversity conservation – the *International Union for Conservation of Nature* (IUCN) – agrees with this principle and declared at its 2nd IUCN World Conservation Congress in October 2000 in Amman that the sustainable use of natural resources is an important driving force in conservation. Through it biological diversity is sustained in the long term while human needs are met.

In February 2004, the 7th Conference of Parties to the *Convention on Biodiversity* (CBD) in Kuala Lumpur adopted the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (AAPG) - to a large extent based on IUCN's Amman Policy Statement. The AAPG provide a framework for assisting stakeholders on all geographical as well as institutional levels on how to ensure that their uses of biodiversity will not lead to its long-term decline. Taking the wildlife sector as an example, it is obvious that the AAPG present a common base to develop coherent approaches to sustainable wildlife use.

Sustainable hunting tourism is an example for such use of natural resources – not only in central Europe, but globally. If it is sustainable it maintains and promotes biodiversity, if it is not, it is a violation of international conventions.

Hunting is often referred to as the ‘consumptive’ use of wildlife in contrast to the ‘non-consumptive’ forms of use (e.g. photo- or nature tourism). Every type of tourism consumes natural assets. Natural resources can suffer heavy damage through mass tourism, even through eco-tourism. In contrast thereto, hunting as a ‘soft’ form of nature tourism, does not require an elaborate infrastructure, nor does it require permanent structures. Relatively high revenues can be generated by few clients. The well-regulated take-off of 1 to 2% of prime or post-prime males does not damage the respective game populations. If funds generated through sustainable hunting tourism are directed towards conservation and if local populations share the economic benefits, this form of the use of natural resources can play a direct role in reducing rural poverty and contributes to conservation efforts.

It is a fact that hunting can lead to the preservation of wild animals – even in endangered and/or threatened game populations. General hunting bans have never stopped the decline of animal populations anywhere; they have in the contrary and for various reasons, sped up the loss of wildlife habitat, the reduction of game numbers and even led to the extinction of species.

(2)

Article 3 of the Convention on Biological Diversity states that it is the sovereign right of nations to use their own resources in compliance with their environmental policies. Numerous states – including many developing countries – make use of their wildlife through controlled hunting. Increasingly, noticeable revenues are finding their way towards local rural populations – or are reinvested into the conservation of wildlife.

Emotional and ideological attacks from the animal rights movement originating from the industrial countries of the northern hemisphere against such forms of use are rightly viewed by developing nations as an attack on their sovereignty and a clandestine form of ‘neo-colonialism’. It is ethically questionable that certain non-governmental organizations, which drive these anti-use campaigns in rich countries, collect immense sums through donations of the unsuspecting public, and spent most of it for themselves or on elaborate PR campaigns. At the same time, the rural populations of the poor countries and the game populations there get little or nothing. Especially indigenous peoples, like the Inuit or the KhoiSan, who depend on hunting for their economic and cultural survival, have suffered under such anti-hunting campaigns and their continued existence and cultural identity is at risk.

Hunting is a legitimate form of land use – a hunting ban would limit the options of the land owners, be it communities, the state or private individuals. This would actually not only be a form of expropriation, but it would also make the owner lose interest in conserving wildlife on the land. For rural populations, specifically in developing countries, the sustainable use of wildlife (meat, monetary income) is a concrete incentive for the conservation of animals on their land and serves as compensation for damages to life, property and crops which are otherwise often not recovered or reimbursed. Revenues from hunting allow governmental or private wildlife management agencies to finance protective measures (e.g. anti poaching activities, habitat protection and/or restoration), which can otherwise not be funded due to other priorities.

(3)

In many countries – especially in the developing world – organized hunting tourism has rapidly grown during the past half century. This trend is of great economic and environmental significance.

For the host country and its rural population this hunting tourism has numerous advantages:

- Conservation of ecosystems;
- Substitution of potentially destructive land use with wildlife management as a form of environmentally friendly land use;
- Income generation and employment in poor and disadvantaged areas;
- Direct benefits for the rural population – monetary, nutrition, jobs;
- Economic and wise use of habitats which are not well suited for agriculture and conventional tourism;
- Ecosystem conservation through uses alternative to intensive agriculture;
- Building awareness amongst the local population regarding the value of wildlife which is otherwise only regarded as harmful, a nuisance and a cost;
- Less negative impacts on the environment in comparison with other forms of tourism;
- Less poaching through the concerted efforts of all who are interested in the revenues generated by hunting tourism.

(4)

Hunting is biological sustainable when there are long term guarantees that the take-off of individual trophy animals does not impair a healthy demographic structure of the particular game population. Furthermore it has to be ascertained that the role of the game population(s) within the ecosystem and their interaction with other game and non-game species furthers the objectives of biological diversity Practices which put individual game species at risk to becoming endangered are not sustainable and cannot be accepted. Hunters are committed to keeping the loss of biodiversity at a minimum and sound wildlife management processes need to be flexible and adaptive in order to quickly react to game population dynamics and changing environmental conditions by modifying take-off levels, quotas and if applicable, hunting methods and seasons.

In accordance with resolutions adopted by the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora* (CITES) selective hunting may contribute to the survival of endangered wildlife species – when, for example, revenues from hunting are a motivation and an incentive to conserve the species in question. Such hunting must be in accordance with the relevant CITES regulations and the export and import regulations of the respective management and scientific authorities. Like every human activity, hunting can develop best when an appropriate societal and legal framework fosters transparency, good Governance and rule of law. Perverse incentives on national levels need to be abolished and both positive and negative sanctions must be effectively applied to guarantee sustainability.

(5)

All hunting tourists have certain obligations. The following points are particularly noteworthy:

1. The hunter has to be aware of and respect the relevant international and national hunting and conservation legislation. Hunting which does not correspond with national laws, CITES, customs or other regulations for the protection of species, is not acceptable. If necessary, legal steps have to be taken against the hunting operator, professional hunter/guide or booking agent.
2. Before leaving for the host country the hunter should get familiar with the general conditions of the country, the hunting area, the wildlife and its ecology.
3. Respect for the culture, religion and way of life of the host country is essential. The national and local rules and traditions of hunting are to be respected. Modest, unobtrusive and respectful behavior is recommended.
4. The internationally recognized written and unwritten principles of ethical hunting and fair chase should be followed – even if the host country does not require this. The guidelines of the conservation of nature and wildlife species are to be followed during hunting.
5. Fair chase allows only hunting of wildlife within its natural habitat; individual game animals need to be interacting parts of wild sustainable populations – where all the temporal and spatial requirements of the particular game population are met, and where the individual has all the chances to escape from the hunter. This rules out ‘canned shooting’, ‘put & take’ practices or the pursuit of drugged, trapped, habituated and tame animals. Shooting from motorized vehicles and with the aid of artificial light sources is as unethical as hunting females with dependent young. Wounded wildlife has always to be tracked down.
6. The hunting tourist has the duty to reject and admonish unlawful and unethical hunting practices and offers and, if necessary, to take or support legal action.
7. The needs of the local population, who lives where the hunt takes place, are to be taken into account while hunting. Game meat should always be used sensibly.
8. Only appropriate weapons and calibers are to be used for hunting. The hunter is obligated to test fire weapons before the hunt.