



environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 984 {NW1273E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 17 of 2020

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Ms H S Winkler (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) What are the reasons that the High Level Panel (HLP) was instructed to advise on the management of elephants when that is comprehensively covered by the Elephant Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa (ENS), 2019, currently with her for signature, and the National Elephant Plan which is in the process of completion;
- (2) what are the reasons that the HLP is considering the live capture of elephants when this is prohibited by the ENS and international trade prohibited by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;
- (3) what are the reasons that the representatives of her Department did not accept the invitation to join the panel of international experts at the conference dealing with issues of confinement, welfare and ethics entitled 'Taking Elephants out of the Room', held on 6 September 2019, to review the keeping of elephants in captivity;
- (4) what are the reasons that the Terms of Reference of the HLP include the culling of elephants defined as the reduction of wild animal populations by selective slaughter when the policy of culling has been scientifically discredited and accordingly terminated in 1995 after 14 629 elephants were culled in the Republic; and
- (5) what are the reasons that (a) culling was reviewed when a certain person (name and details furnished) is on record saying there would be no further culling for population control purposes in

the Kruger National Park and (b) the specified person has been excluded from this panel and only one other elephant expert was included?

984. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) The High Level Panel is tasked with the review of existing policies, legislation and practices related to the management, breeding, hunting, trade and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros. The review process, as led by the High Level Panel (HLP), is inclusive of the assessment of all Norms and Standards for these four species and, in this case, includes any relevant practices affecting elephants. We, therefore, see no contradictions with this assignment to the HLP, while noting that the management of elephants is comprehensively covered in numerous policy tools. The prioritisation of the four species was informed by the consistent emotive and polarised debates nationally, and even at international platforms. The Terms of Reference of the HLP are clear on expected outcomes, and which include recommendations for the Minister to consider in entrenching or enhancing policies, strategies and practices.

The development of the Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa, 2008 (ENS), was one of the outcomes of an extensive consultative process on elephants. While the strict approach towards management of elephants, as provided for in the ENS (2008), is still justifiable, a number of challenges regarding the effective implementation of the ENS have emerged over the past few years. The amendment of the ENS, which was the first amendment process since the implementation of the ENS in 2008, is aimed at addressing these implementation challenges.

Additionally, during the public consultation process on the amendment of the ENS, a number of short-comings in the ENS that would require further amendment were highlighted, but would require a much broader public consultation process.

- (2) The purpose of the High-Level Panel is to review existing policies, legislation and practices in a holistic manner; and these would include existing policies and legislation that affect elephants and elephant management. Capture and translocation are options that are currently provided for in the ENS for the management of elephant population sizes and distribution.

- (3) The Department was unable to accept the invitation due to other obligations and commitments at the time.
- (4) The ENS make provision for the culling of elephants as a management option to reduce the size of the elephant population, albeit under strict requirements, which include that culling may only be done in accordance with a culling plan that must be approved by the issuing authority. The culling plan must be developed with the assistance of an ecologist who is a recognised elephant management specialist. I can confirm that SANParks, which hosts the majority of elephants in South Africa has not used this provision since its enactment.
- (5) (a) See 4 above.
- b) No government officials, or any other officials from the public entities, have been appointed as members of the High-Level Panel. The specified person referred to is part of the technical team that provides expert advice to the High-Level Panel as and when required. The specified person has already participated in discussions several times at the invitation of the High-Level Panel and is regarded in high esteem.

Regards



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MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT
DATE: 4.06.2020.....