



September 21, 2000

His Excellency Dr. Samuel Daniel Shafiishuna Nujoma
President
State House, Windhoek
NAMIBIA
FAX: 011 264 61 22 1770

Dear Dr. Nujoma:

I am writing on behalf of the more than 7 million members and constituents of The Humane Society of the United States and its international arm, Humane Society International (HSUS/HSI). The HSUS/HSI is aware that your government has increased the Cape fur seal hunt quota from 35,000 to 67,000 for the 2000 season (August 1-November 15). We wish to protest this quota increase and the continuance of the fur seal hunt, which is not only cruel but also quite probably unsustainable.

The quota for this hunt is based on very little science and a great deal of short-term economic incentive. We understand that there are plans to establish an entire seal processing industry in Henties Bay. Historically many wildlife-based industries have led to a decline, even to the point of extinction, of local populations of wildlife. Given the history of sealing around the world and the lack of a scientific basis for the Namibian hunt's quota system, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the plans for Henties Bay will eventually lead to the collapse of the Namibian Cape fur seal population.

In 1994 this population suffered a massive die-off of 200,000 animals due to local oceanic anomalies (possibly the result of weather and ocean circulation pattern changes attributed to global warming). However, the quota for the hunt was not adjusted in any way to account for these losses, indicating that the management regime governing this hunt is neither science-based nor risk averse. Around the world, seals and sea lions have been suffering from epizootics of emergent diseases (often caused by species-bridging pathogens such as canine distemper virus). Organochlorine pollutants and heavy metals can depress the mammalian immune response; as levels of these contaminants continue to increase in the marine environment, it is likely that marine mammal epizootics will also increase in occurrence. If an epizootic strikes the Namibian fur seal population on top of the hunt, a disastrous decline could result.

Now is not the time for any nation to increase its quotas for marine wildlife hunts. Frankly investing heavily in a fur seal-based industry at this time seems shortsighted and unwise from an economic perspective as well as an ecological one. Nature is unpredictable and many local economies that have attempted to profit from wildlife

Promoting the protection of all animals worldwide

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hunts have driven themselves as well as the animals to extinction. The HSUS/HSI strongly urges your government to reduce the quota for Cape fur seals, for the rest of this season and in future seasons, and to eventually phase out the hunt altogether, allowing the local economy to make an orderly transition to other sources of income.

Seal hunts are cruel and archaic. Basing a region's economic future on expanding such a hunt is a huge step backward as the world enters the 21st century. Please do not allow your government to add to the many negative pressures on the marine environment by continuing to condone and support this hunt.

Thank you for your attention to our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Naomi A. Rose, Ph.D.
Marine Mammal Scientist
Wildlife and Habitat Protection

Cc: The Honorable Hage Geingob, Prime Minister
The Honorable Dr. Abraham Iyambo, Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources