



PRESS RELEASE
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ENERGY AND MINING

New Campaign Warns People Against Eating Bushmeat
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"It's illegal. It's dangerous. It carries diseases."

That's the message from a hard-hitting new campaign warning against the trade and consumption of bushmeat launched today by the Government of Malawi through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) in partnership with Lilongwe Wildlife Trust.

Brighton Kumchedwa, Director for the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, said, "People may think that poaching for, or trading in, bushmeat is a 'soft' wildlife crime. But the truth is that it is a serious offence that is illegal without a Government licence and can lead to a prison sentence. What's more, the consumption of bushmeat carries significant health risks. We want to ensure that the public at large are well informed of these dangers."

These risks are particularly pertinent in Malawi, with one recent study of four protected areas estimating that almost 40% of people in these communities were engaged in the consumption of bushmeat.¹

The campaign is also timely given the recent outbreak of the coronavirus, which is believed to have originated from wild animals sold to eat in markets in Wuhan, China. In response, the Chinese Government has banned consumption and trade in wildlife products.² The virus has since spread to over 150 other countries and territories³, with the number of cases globally surpassing 180,000.⁴

Experts warn that the risks posed to humans by animal-borne diseases are likely to become more significant in the future, as climate change and globalisation affect the interaction between people and animals. In fact, most new infectious diseases come from wildlife⁵. Just last year countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone were issuing similar directives in the wake of the Ebola crisis, which also originated from the consumption of infected wild animals before mutating to allow human-to-human transmission.

Malawi is yet to record a case of coronavirus or Ebola and has taken steps to control the risks posed by other zoonotic diseases (conditions that can be passed from

¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339041648_Bushmeat_hunting_and_consumption_is_a_pervasive_issue_in_African_savannahs_insights_from_four_protected_areas_in_Malawi

²<https://www.forbes.com/sites/lisettevoytko/2020/02/24/china-permanently-bans-wildlife-trade-as-global-coronavirus-cases-surge/>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6908e1.htm>

⁴<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/coronavirus-map-confirmed-cases-2020-n1120686>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51237225>

animals to humans). Last year, for example, the Government took action to prevent the transmission of anthrax from a number of infected hippos in Liwonde National Park to humans.⁶ As a result, no fatalities were recorded.

“If someone is prepared to participate in an illegal and dangerous activity like poaching or trading on the black market, can you really trust them to tell you the truth about where the meat came from, how it has been stored, and for how long? I certainly wouldn’t risk it for my children.” said Hon Werani Chilenga, Chair of the Parliamentary Natural Resources Committee and Co-Chair of the Malawi Parliamentary Conservation Caucus.

“The bushmeat trade is a serious threat to our natural heritage. It has decimated species and contributed to the destruction of ecosystems. Conserving our biodiversity and protecting the health and wellbeing of our citizens is a national priority, and this initiative is a most welcome development.”

The campaign is being implemented by the DNPW and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, thanks to support from the Lion Recovery Fund and Zambian Wildlife Charity Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP).

Samantha Nampuntha, Campaigns Manager for Lilongwe Wildlife Trust, explained, “Working with our Zambian colleagues, we decided to focus our campaign messages on the most immediate risks posed by the trade and consumption of bushmeat, since research shows that these are most likely to drive behavioural change. By keeping the very real risks of disease and prosecution front of mind, we are hoping that the prospect of eating bushmeat becomes a lot less appetising.”

Public service announcements will be aired on TV and radio and shared through social media. Campaigners are also reaching out to communities in protected areas to spread the message through solar cinema and street theatre.

Watch the film and find out more at www.lilongwewildlife.org/donteatbushmeat.

Signed

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ENERGY AND MINING**



⁶ <https://mwnation.com/hippos-continue-to-die-in-liwonde/>