



MOTIVATION STATEMENT ON the MOTION TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THE INCREASING SEAL POPULATIONS ON THE SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF FISH STOCKS IN NAMIBIA

HON H. MUKAPULI

Hon. Speaker

Distinguished Members of this August House

INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure that I rise to motivate the **MOTION TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THE INCREASING SEAL POPULATIONS ON THE SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF FISH STOCKS IN NAMIBIA.**

The Motion was tabled in this August House on 1 March 2023 by Hon Mike Kavekatora and subsequently referred to this Committee on 3 March 2023 to deliberate and find solutions to the devastating increasing in seal population and the impacts on the sustainable harvesting of fish stocks.

The sub-committee on Fisheries held Consultative meetings with key stakeholders in the fishing industry who included fishing companies and their associations, seal processing companies, regional leadership and local authorities. Consultations were held in Lüderitz, Swakopmund, Walvis Bay and Henties Bay the main hubs of the fishing industry and where seal colonies are located. A total of 18 stakeholders were consulted. In addition the Committee visited wolf bay, cape cross and pelican bay seal colonies to witness and experience the reality of the increase in seals and observe the positive impact seals have on tourism.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE INVESTIGATIONS/CONSULTATIONS WERE:

- 1.1. To understand legislations, policies and regulations governing Seal Curling/Harvesting in Namibia

- 1.2. Investigate if the legislations in place are in line with international protocols, treaties Namibia is signatory too.
- 1.3. To understand the methods used in the hunting of seals on why it's been widely criticised by animal welfare organisations
- 1.4. To obtain information on quotas allocated to seal hunting in relation to the estimated population

Hon. Speaker

Members of this August House

KEY FINDINGS

The Cape Fur Seal commonly known as the brown fur seal is the largest and most robust member of the fur seals. The African fur seal lives around the southern and south-western coast of Africa from Cape Cross in Namibia and around the Cape of Good Hope to Black Rocks near Port Elizabeth . The African fur seal's diet is made of up to 70% fish, 20% squid, 2% crab and other species such as crustaceans, cephalopods and sometimes birds. Namibia is estimated to have around 1.4 to 1.5 million seals based on 2022 statistics spread along the coastal line. Allow me to share with the House some of our main findings which were;

1. The Cape brown fur seal's main predator is the great white sharks and killer whales (species we don't usually have in Namibian water), although they are also preyed upon by various other animals such as the vagrant southern elephant seals. Land-based predators include black-backed jackals, brown hyenas and occasionally lions on the Skeleton Coast in Namibia. Seagulls peck the eyes out of baby seals to render them helpless and disabled, and feast on their flesh.
2. Scientific data validates the Motion's assertion that the population of seals have increased to 1.6 million in comparison (see chart 4) in 1970 the population was at 680 000.
3. Namibia has about 26 seal colony spread from the South (Karas) to the North (Erongo Region). As depicted (chart 1 of this report) there has been an increase in some colonies and decrease in majority of colonies since 1993 mainly attributed to migration from one colony to the other in search of food.

4. The Cape fur seals are opportunistic predators; their diet has been analysed through prey remains found in the scats. Studies have shown that a Cape fur seal consumes about 1.4 to 6.8 kg of food per day depending on the age, sex and reproductive status.
5. The diet of seals as depicted in the (chart 3 and 4 of this report) indicate that the goby scientific name (Gobiidae) is their favourite food comprising in some instances up to 80% of their diet. Worth mentioning here is that goby is not a commercial fish species harvested by Humans for consumption.
6. Seal Rights Holders have not been fully utilising their quotas as allocated, the harvesting has been primarily on Bulls (due to the value of the Genitalia) whereas there has been few to none harvesting of pups over the years.
7. Seal population has increased over the years mainly due to the fact that seal quotas are not fully utilised due to varied reasons key among others being lack of a market to sell seal products
8. Companies allocated seal harvesting quotas have no means to harvest nor sell the products instead they sell their rights to the Seal Factory in Henties Bay to do the hunting, processing and marketing.
9. The Henties Bay factory only survive on entering into agreements with rights holders to do business, it does not get any seal quotas thus limiting its operations. Henties Bay Municipality have approved for the construction of a second Seal Factory.
10. Seal harvesting season runs from 1 July to November 15 yearly about 6 months, the period is not sufficient for rights holders to complete the full quota allocated mainly due to bad weather (case of Lüderitz) and limited availability of Bulls. Observations indicate Bulls start appearing in numbers towards the end of November which is past the harvest season.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of recommendations among others the Committee recommending that;

1. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources for the sake of public interest to annually publish data on the total number of the seal population, the size of the quotas and the actual number of pups and bulls harvested.

2. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources look into the possibility of extending the Harvest season to the end of November to enable the harvesters to catch their full quotas as allocated, cognizant of the fact that Bulls only come to shore towards the end of September which at present only gives two weeks of harvesting.

3. Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to promote the sale for consumption of seal meat locally as a protein source through the Namibia Fish Consumption.

4. Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Increase the quota holders/participants and quantity from 50 000 to 200 000 for a fixed period of time to reduce numbers to a sustainable level.

In conclusion Hon Speaker, Scientific data shows that apart from seals depleting fish stocks climate change and overfishing by humans also contributes. Seals are a keystone species of which their reduction or near elimination will have adverse impact on the overall marine ecosystem. Sustainability of the ecosystem should be a key factor in determining appropriate responses to the increasing effects of seals.

Hon Speaker, with these few remarks, I now have the honor to submit the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources on **THE REPORT ON THE MOTION TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF THE INCREASING SEAL POPULATIONS ON THE SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF FISH STOCKS IN NAMIBIA** to this August House for consideration, discussion and adoption.

I so move Honourable Speaker,