

WRSA PRESS RELEASE

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MINISTER GEORGE HIDES BEHIND COURT CASE TO EXCUSE HIS OWN FAILURE

Wildlife Ranching South Africa NPC (WRSA) rejects the misleading statement issued today by Minister Dion George regarding the CITES export quotas for African Elephant, Black Rhinoceros and Leopard hunting trophies.

In its 12 September 2025 statement, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), speaking for the Minister, claims that quotas cannot be set until the court rules on WRSA's application. This assertion is false and misleading. The only reason WRSA approached the court is because the Minister had already failed to carry out his legal duty to set the quotas. The court case exists because of his inaction. To now use that very case as justification for prolonging his failure is circular reasoning of the highest order and a transparent attempt at political sleight of hand.

"This is responsibility turned on its head," says Richard York, WRSA CEO. "The Minister is using a case brought against him for failing to do his job, as the very reason to keep failing at that job."

At its core, this is not prudence but evasion. Instead of taking responsibility, the Minister is hiding behind a legal process of his own making. This is a classic case of rule by delay replacing the rule of law. The wildlife industry and the communities which rely upon us cannot afford such evasions.

The law binds the government equally. Ministers do not get to choose whether or when to exercise their legal duties. Failure to act is as unlawful as acting irrationally. To cite "respect for the court" while using the judiciary as a political shield is to distort the separation of powers.

"Instead of correcting the failures of his predecessors, the new GNU Minister has simply amplified them." says Gerhard Heyneke, previous Chair of WRSA.

South Africa's international reputation under CITES, and the livelihoods of rural communities who rely on conservation-based economies, are being damaged by this indecision.

"The people who live with and conserve wildlife every day are paying the price for political evasion by Mr George. The only real obstacle is the Minister and his department, which has simply recycled the same failed policies and institutional inertia of his predecessors," York adds.

It is ordinary South Africans on the ground who carry the cost of conservation, while Minister George hides behind excuses. York emphasised, "The 2024 quota is already lost. We are now in mid-September 2025, making the likelihood of a feasible 2025 quota highly unlikely. Instead of acknowledging his own failures, the Minister seeks to skirt the blame."

WRSA further confirms that it will be consulting with its legal team on the Minister's latest statement in order to seek expedited case management and enrolment of the matter in court. By declaring his intention to continue refusing to act, the Minister has made it clear that his failure is deliberate. This defiance of lawful duty will be brought before the court, where WRSA will seek whatever orders are necessary to force compliance.

"We will place the Minister's refusal squarely before the court and will seek whatever relief is necessary to compel him to comply with his legal duties," York said. "The rule of law demands action, not excuses. South Africa's conservation future cannot be held hostage to political delay."

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