

## CPHCSA ADDRESS

Master of ceremonies,  
Honourable...,  
President (chair) and executive of the Custodians (I love that name)  
Invited guests  
Dear members  
Ladies & Gentlemen – and all protocol observed

The sixteen-year-old activist Greta Thunberg has campaigned feverishly for urgent action against climate change and habitat loss. She became the voice and face for what many others have claimed for years already - the destruction and loss of habitat on a magnificent scale, the extinction of species, and claiming that we are in the beginning of the sixth mass extinction.

She predicts the world's end in 10 years' time...

The youth is suddenly inspired, and the world is listening.

But here we are still being reprimanded as hunters - the evil killers and murderers. This while hunting is the ONE thing that protects habitats.

The human race doesn't see itself as a species any longer, as part of nature, and that death culminates life, and that life always leads to death - even a human being's.

"How can you kill something that you say you care for and love?" These are the questions we are being faced with. A cattle or sheep farmer never gets this question.

I answer: I kill it because I survive from it - and I care for it because I cannot go without it. It is part of my existence. And I love it because it brings me beauty, realness and a life well-lived, full of adventure, experiences and stories around a campfire. Because I realised that there is something sort of ecstatic in hunting. Not bloodlust as people want to make it out to be, but a powerful CONNECTION you feel with all of life. And because when you shoot, the feeling doesn't dissipate with the sound of the shot. It lingers. It permeates your limbs and sharpens your senses — adding a certain self-possession to your being, or a being to your self-possession.

And because anyone can buy a car or a night on the town. Most of us shell our days like peanuts. But one in a thousand can look at the world with amazement. I don't mean staring at the Eiffel Tower. I'm talking about the wing of a dragonfly. The yellow of an eye, the rhythm of a kudu. Of walking through an unsullied hour with an unsullied heart. And because I love my children, and I don't want them to live life with a mask on.

But still hunters are seen as a pariah, an outcast.

In Geneva during CITES Cop18, after I realised with shock that science is falsifiable, while conspiracy theories are not, and that our proven conservation efforts are rather being punished than rewarded, I was told that I was being emotional about it. Normally I would have a problem with a man telling me that I was emotional at work, but after what happened in Geneva, after thinking that I was going home without hope for the future of my children, he was damned right, I am emotional. Maybe emotion is what's missing from stupid so-called logic behind our de-humanised conservation... This is not a rational, deliberate process. It's the rogue enactment of a prepared script that forces leaders to rendering decisions determining the fate of the planet and mankind under excruciating pressure...

The infiltration into our African countries by animals rights and anti-sustainable use groups, like IFAW into Zimbabwe and Born Free into Zambia is unacceptable! At the recent AWCF held in Zmbabwe, someone posed the question: "Why is such a resource rich continent like Africa still stuck in poverty?"

L&G, Why do we continue to sell our souls? We are being made to think that we are being helped, but we are in fact being indebted! Again again! How long should Africa be indebted to others, while it in fact should be the other way around? We have the resources that the world seeks - whether on a consumptive or a non consumptive way - Why are we not demanding our fair trade ?

If we don't do everything in our power to fix it, reduce the odds of this ever happening again, then aren't we all complicit in a recklessness that borders on immorality?

But there is a fine line between use and abuse. When wildlife is listed as agricultural livestock, is it use or is it abuse? When wildlife is seen as pure commodities, as ornaments for harvesting, as lives to be sold for the highest price according to its abundance, instead of the value the experience of the hunt adds to your own life....

How absolutely certain are we between the difference of sustainable use versus sustainable abuse? A Hunter is not automatically a conservationist.

If you haven't by now, it's time...

Some argue that consciousness is the new luxury when it comes to travel.

The world is waking up slowly but surely and getting more conscious about their responsibilities towards wildlife and conservation. And this creates opportunities for us to be bold and outspoken.

But I have come to learn that there are two groups of people; some who need more time, and some who need more sense. There's no hope for the second group, but I have some hope for the first.

We are getting tired of ducking bullets and from being stripped of our identity — to conform with society and to be politically correct. Until we can speak our truth and have others not only listen to us, but BELIEVE us, we will never truly be free...

We have by now provided ample science and evidence to prove our conservation successes.

Let us be brave — Hunters - don't you dare hide the fact that you hunt. Become a proud but responsible advocate.

Governments - don't you dare sell our souls.

Communities - look for the action, because actions bring hope. Because hope is what comes next...

So, L&G, leave nothing to chance and believe that everything is possible. Use every opportunity that you have to engage others. Stop using plastic bags. Save more water. Gather science and data. Cherish all life with the same amount of respect. Become an even more responsible citizen and get much more involved on all levels, because we are not only hunters - **We are firstly conservationist.**

The African lion is more cautious on equal footing, but even then, he won't back down. He has no fear, you see, not as we understand it. He can only be exactly what he is, what his nature dictates, and nothing else.

Thank you,

Danene vd Westhuyzen

President, Namibia Professional Hunting Association

CEO, Operators & Hunting Associations of Africa