



Suspect. UWA officials with a suspect arrested for illegally trading in pangolins which is one of the most endangered species, recently. Under the proposed law, life imprisonment and, or a fine of Shs200m awaits convicts. FILE PHOTO

New Bill proposes life imprisonment for illegal wildlife traders

Penalty. Profits incurred from illegal trade shall, after a successful application to court by the executive director, be forfeited.

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KAMPALA. A new law that prohibits illegal importation or exportation of wild life species is in offing. Life imprisonment and, or a fine of Shs200m awaits any individual found guilty of the offence, according to the proposed law.

It proposes that on top of restrictions on wildlife trade imposed by the convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, the minister responsible for wildlife may in consultation with his or her trade counterpart impose additional restrictions.

To conserve protected species, a person who "takes, hunts, molests, or reduces into possession protected specimen or is in any way involved in the sale or illegal transfer of protected species is guilty of the offence.

Should such transaction involve an animal "extinct in the world, critically endangered or endangered, the offender shall upon conviction suffer life imprisonment and or a Shs20b fine.

Profits incurred from illegal trade shall, after a successful application to court by the executive director, be forfeited.

Clause 76 provides for the

confiscation of property of individuals convicted of illegal trading in illegal wildlife.

The Bill prescribes for the issuance of a professional hunters' licence "on terms and conditions it considers necessary, and on payment of a prescribed fee."

An individual who "conducts business as a professional hunter, advertises him or herself as one, solicits a contract or commission in the capacity of a professional hunter or trapper or assists another person to hunt a protected animal for gain or reward faces up to 10 years in jail without a fine.

Compensation

Ugandans, who suffer wild animal attack, will now be compensated should the Bill become law.

Titled Uganda Wildlife Bill 2017, the proposed law establishes a Wildlife Compensation Verification Committee under clause 82, which shall be responsible for verification of compensation claims by affected individuals.

The proposed five-member committee includes representatives of the Uganda Wildlife Authority, the chief government valuer,

the minister responsible for wildlife, community wildlife committee and the Attorney General's office.

In the case of death or injury, claims are only valid where the animals that have caused such death or injury is either an elephant, a lion, leopard, crocodile, buffalo, hyena, hippopotamus, gorilla or chimpanzee as specified.

Section 4, however, stipulates that no compensation shall be paid "where the claimant failed to take reasonable measures to protect himself or herself" or his or her "property from damage from wildlife or where his or her land use practices are incompatible with approved land use plans for the area."

Under clause 86, the minister is empowered to, by way of statutory instrument, "Prescribe forms to be used under this Act."

Compensation scheme

Under clause 82 (3), the Bill seeks to introduce a compensation scheme that shall be used for financing claims for human death, injuries or damage to property caused by a wild animal outside a protected area.

Claims that cannot be immediately paid under the scheme shall at once become public debt to be paid from the wildlife compensation scheme when the funds become available, and outstanding funds shall be treated as public debt and not directly be charged on the Uganda Wildlife Authority's account.

Progress

Deputy Speaker of Parliament Jacob Oulanyah yesterday forwarded the Bill to the Committee on Natural Resources for scrutiny.



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