

To:

Democratic Alliance Federal Head Office Cape Town

headoffice@da.org.za

Subject:

appeal to continue the work of former Minister Dr Dion George on captive lion breeding industry

Netherlands, Stampersgat, 18th November 2025

Dear Madams, Sirs of the Democratic Alliance,

Our NGO called SPOTS (active from out Netherlands) and many other organizations both in,- and outside South Africa, campaigned incessantly to close the exploitative commercial captive lion industry. This (global) pressure led to among others the Parliamentary Colloquium in 2018. This ultimately led to the landmark decision in May 2021 to end the country's controversial captive lion industry.

One reason given by Barbara Creecy, South Africa's environment Minister at time, for shutting down this captive industry was 'the risk that trade in lion parts poses to stimulating poaching and illegal trade', while the official government report highlighted the risk of the 'laundering of poached parts' into the legal market. The decision was also shaped by the accusations of severe neglect levelled by conservationists and animal welfare groups for years against the captive industry. The government's assessment also found that the negative associations of captive lions were damaging to South African reputation of being the African leader in biodiversity, leading to damage to the very important ecotourism which generates important income for South Africa.

The conclusions of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) are reflected in a growing body of science-based and peer-reviewed evidence which shows the risks which this industry is posing on [illegal wildlife trade](#) and thus biodiversity, the [welfare implication of the commercial captive predator industry](#), the [behaviour and welfare of lion cubs used in tourism experiences](#) and the [risk of zoonotic disease transmission](#) this industry is forming (the links to these research papers can also be found at the bottom of this letter).

Since then, under the direction of former Environmental Ministers Creecy and George, significant steps have been taken towards democratic policy change to phase out South Africa's commercial captive lion industry. Most recently illustrated by the setting of a zero CITES annual lion bone export quota that Minister George gazetted for public participation on 22 September 2025.

We therefore regret the fact that Mr Dion George has been replaced by Mr Willem Aucamp. Although it is early stage to conclude which path Mr Aucamp will take, we are concerned since according to numerous publicly available news reports, Mr Aucamp can be linked to activities and events involving the captive wildlife industry. Of further concern is that publicly available information reflects Mr Aucamp's attendance of industry-linked events, such as the industries of lion breeding, other captive wildlife facilities, and the very organization litigating against the DFFE concerning the setting of a lion bone export quota.

We trust the Democratic Alliance will urge Minister Aucamp to continue the democratic process to end the captive lion industry and all her side activities, as started by his former predecessors. This would be in line with the democratic process which has been carried out since 2018. But it would also be in accordance with science (as mentioned earlier) and would be fully in line with your [party's Resolution, tabled at the DA 2023 Federal Congress](#) to “end the captive predator breeding, captive “canned lion” hunts and lion bone export”.

The DFFE’s leadership has far-reaching implications, not only for conservation and biodiversity, but also for how South Africa is viewed internationally in its handling of wildlife trade, trafficking, and “sustainable use.” The world is watching and trust in this portfolio’s independence is essential.

Best Regards,

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Links,

<https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1053863>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/animal-welfare/article/welfare-concerns-associated-with-captive-lions-panthera-leo-and-the-implications-for-commercial-lion-farms-in-south-africa/BDD074F3A15EB226827F1BCE78AEE8ED>

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/animal-welfare/article/behaviour-and-welfare-of-african-lion-panthera-leo-cubs-used-in-contact-wildlife-tourism/9699775D1D338146E81CDBED01AF480F>

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/9/1692>

<https://www.da.org.za/dacongress2023>