

Zambia lifts ban on safari hunting

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Tourists view the Victoria Falls in Livingstone, Zambia, on November 11, 2004

Zambia has lifted a 20-month ban on safari hunting because it has lost too much revenue, but lions and leopards will remain protected, the government said Wednesday.

The ban was imposed in January 2013 over allegations of corruption in the awarding of government hunting concessions, and because of fears for the future of the country's population of big cats.

"We lost too much revenue following the ban on hunting and the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) had a lot of financial problems," Tourism Minister Jean Kapata told AFP.

Hunting fees will be raised, she added, without providing details.

ZAWA spokesperson Readith Muliya said in a statement that the ban on hunting of lions and leopards remained in place.

"Hunting will be conducted under laid down conditions and strict supervision from ZAWA. But the ban on [big cats](#) still stands," Muliya said.

The southern African country, which draws tourists to the world-famous Victoria Falls, hopes to develop a wildlife [tourism](#) trade, which has long been a mainstay of the economies in neighbouring countries.

At the time the ban was imposed, the then tourism minister Sylvia Masebo said: "We do not have enough cats for hunting purposes. The cats are gone."

ZAWA had opposed the ban, saying it would be bad for the tourism industry.

"The population of cats in Zambia is around 3,400 to 3,500, and with the ban on safari hunting for cats we are likely to lose on revenue," said ZAWA's head of research, Chuma Simukonda.

"It is these [cats](#) that make Zambia's safari hunting competitive in the region," he said.

Only 55 felines were hunted a year, he said, though the income from the sport was unknown.

Shortly before the ban was imposed, ZAWA's director and senior officials were fired for alleged corruption in the awarding of safari hunting concessions.

The country's hunting community saw the ban as political meddling.

"Blood sport is more beneficial to this country than game viewing," said Gavin Robinson of the Professional Hunters Association.

"People from Europe and America wish to hunt here but they will now move elsewhere, meaning all the clients will leave Zambia," he added.

Conservationists, however, had welcomed the [ban](#).

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