

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**24 FEBRUARY 2026**

### **MPUMALANGA PHASING OUT CAPTIVE LION FACILITIES**

The Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) fully supports the national initiatives approved by Cabinet of South Africa in April 2024, which are aimed at the responsible, lawful, and humane closure of the captive lion industry in South Africa. In alignment with the Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros (2024), the MTPA through the Voluntary Exit Programme from the captive lion industry coordinated by the Ministerial Task Team (MTT) is working constructively with captive lion facility owners in the province to implement the national objective of bringing the industry to an orderly, fair, and ethical conclusion.

The MTPA remains firmly aligned with national policy directives that seek to strengthen animal welfare and wellbeing, enhance conservation integrity, and ensure that South Africa's wildlife management practices are ethical, transparent, and internationally credible. During this transition period, the Agency is committed to ensuring that all captive lion facilities in Mpumalanga continue to comply fully with existing legislative and regulatory requirements.

Accordingly, no permits will be issued for the establishment of new captive lion facilities, captive breeding of lions will not be permitted in the province, and the importation of captive lions from other provinces will be progressively phased out. The MTPA will continue to work closely with former representatives of the MTT and other stakeholders to train and implement a coordinated captive lion sterilisation programme. All lions currently housed in captive facilities must be managed in accordance with approved animal welfare and well-being standards. To support this, the MTPA will facilitate access to MTT-accredited training for MTPA officials, relevant provincial authorities, facility staff, and conservation and animal welfare organisations within the province. The province will maintain rigorous regulatory oversight and strict permitting conditions where wildlife is managed in captive environments, while progressively phasing out captive lion facilities in favour of ethical, conservation-led tourism.

As one of South Africa's premier and internationally renowned wildlife destinations, Mpumalanga places a strong emphasis on in situ conservation through extensive wildlife systems that enhance the province's biodiversity and cultural heritage. This transition presents a significant opportunity to strengthen Mpumalanga's biodiversity assets through the expansion of wilderness areas and formally protected nature reserves, while contributing meaningfully to sustainable economic growth and job creation. As a country globally recognised for world-class wildlife tourism, South Africa provides a powerful platform from which the

MTPA will decisively champion ethical tourism that places conservation, animal welfare and well-being, and sustainability at its core.

The MTPA values its ongoing collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), captive lion facility owners, veterinary authorities, and other key stakeholders to ensure a coordinated, well-managed, and socially responsible implementation of the exit strategy from the captive lion industry. Recognising the complexity of this process, the MTPA invites stakeholders, conservation partners, and investors to work closely with the Agency to achieve shared objectives of enhanced biodiversity conservation, sustainable employment, and inclusive socio-economic development. Mpumalanga welcomes engagement and investment in its nature reserves and conservation-based tourism initiatives that support long-term ecological resilience and economic prosperity.

The MTPA remains unwavering in its commitment to a future in which Mpumalanga leads by example in ethical, conservation-driven tourism and sustainable use practices. By responsibly phasing out the captive lion industry, the province is safeguarding animal welfare and biodiversity while creating new opportunities for sustainable economic growth, job creation, and international recognition.

Through collaboration, innovation, and steadfast adherence to national conservation policies, Mpumalanga will continue to strengthen South Africa's reputation as a world-class wildlife destination, demonstrating that economic development and ethical wildlife stewardship can, and must, go hand in hand to ensure the sustainability of the country's biodiversity heritage.

**END.**

*Issued by the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency*

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