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*Joint Press release by the Tanzanian Ministry for Natural Resources and Tourism, the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority, the German Embassy Tanzania, and Frankfurt Zoological Society*

## **Anti-poaching aircraft reports for duty in Tanzania's Selous**

**31 March 2016 – Today, Dr. Gerd Müller, Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany handed over a Husky aircraft to Prof. Jumanne Maghembe, the Tanzanian Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism. The aircraft will be deployed by Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) in close cooperation with the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) for surveillance of wildlife in the Selous Game Reserve and to support the fight against poaching.**

The German Minister addressed the guests of the handover ceremony at Matambwe Airstrip in the Selous: "Poaching threatens biodiversity in many of Africa's remaining wilderness areas and undermines security of nations and the livelihoods of people," said Minister Müller. "Handing this aircraft over to the Tanzanian authorities and FZS is an important cornerstone of our longstanding support for the Selous Game Reserve and the adjacent communities."

"For a large area like the Selous Game Reserve, one of the largest uninhabited protected areas of Africa, aerial surveillance is vital," said Minister Maghembe. He thanked the German government for the support in countering the recent upsurge in poaching. "This aircraft will also help the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority carrying out wildlife and habitat monitoring in the Selous as one of Tanzania's biodiversity hotspots of global relevance," Maghembe added.

The group visited the Rufiji River in the Selous Game Reserve to discuss the conservation challenges on-site. They also met with representatives of the private sector to explore ways to combine wildlife conservation and sustainable tourism.

The German Ambassador Egon Kochanke underlined that "The Selous Game Reserve is not only one of the largest protected areas in Africa but also the centrepiece of the new Tanzania Wildlife Authority."

The area has been hit very hard by poachers: Between 2009 and 2014, the population of approximately 45,000 elephants at that time has been decimated to approximately 15,000. Today, all of Tanzania is estimated to have about 45,000 elephants, 60% less than in 2009.

"Poaching is a severe threat to biodiversity," said Christof Schenk, CEO of Frankfurt Zoological Society, "not only because it can lead to local extinctions of targeted species like elephant and rhino, but because their disappearance can harm the ecosystem altogether. Frankfurt Zoological Society is committed to contribute to halting the deterioration of the Selous."

In 1982, the Selous was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, the Selous is regarded as a World Heritage Site 'in danger'. By UNESCO standards, extraction of mineral resources and large-scale land use change are prohibited. "Now is the time to enhance protection of the area to enable wildlife populations to regrow and to restore the secured status of the World Heritage Site," says Schenk.

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The German Government, through the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, has provided funding for the acquisition of two Husky A-1C Aircraft to support the Tanzanian wildlife authorities in countering the poaching threat and monitoring wildlife and habitats.

The Selous aircraft will be operated by Frankfurt Zoological Society in close cooperation with TAWA. With aerial support, poacher camps and illegal activities can be detected and the pilots can provide critical information to ranger forces on the ground. The Husky is well suited for monitoring and anti-poaching surveys as it operates at low heights and slow speeds. The other Husky aircraft is being deployed in the Tanzanian Serengeti National Park.

Since 2012 Germany has committed 100 Mio. EUR for biodiversity protection and rural development in Tanzania, including 18 Mio. EUR for the Selous Game Reserve. The Selous project is being implemented by FZS, KfW, GIZ, WWF in collaboration with MNRT and TAWA. Frankfurt Zoological Society's Selous Conservation Project started in the early 1980s.

#### **Notes for editors:**

The Selous is one of Africa's largest protected areas, with photographic tourism and hunting permitted in designated parts of the area. The Selous covers about 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> which is an area larger than Switzerland and it is internationally recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in danger.

The Selous Game Reserve is a Miombo woodland area with a high density and diversity of species. It is home to large populations of wild dog, lion, hippo and buffalo. There are also important populations of ungulates including sable antelope, Lichtenstein's hartebeest, greater kudu, eland and Niassa wildebeest. In addition, there is also a large number of Nile crocodile and over 430 species of birds.

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