

To the Minister of Tourism & Minister of Fisheries of Mozambique;

I am writing to you regarding the devastating slaughter of manta rays along the Inhambane coastline of Southern Mozambique. As yet I have not visited your country, but I have still heard about these activities from abroad, and even seen photographs. I was deeply saddened to learn that this slaughter was occurring in Mozambique on a regular basis and is not even prohibited by law!

Research efforts have shown that this coastline is home to one of the largest populations of manta rays in the entire world. Yet if fishermen continue to slaughter these animals your population (which is less than 1,500 individuals) will soon be wiped out. These ocean giants deserve to be protected and their habitat preserved. It is also in the best interest of Mozambique's future to protect these ocean resources. Mozambique's fast growing reputation as a world-class dive destination hinges on the sightings of these animals. If these animals are gone and your marine ecosystems are destroyed, there is little to attract tourists to this region.

It is my opinion that manta rays should be a protected species so that they can be used in a sustainable way by the Mozambican people for eco-tourism. By using these large and charismatic animals of the sea as a beacon of hope in Mozambique, you can encourage their conservation and further educate the people of Mozambique about their significance for their future. Each animal is potentially worth millions over its lifetime; IF they are protected. However, in comparison, harvesting them unsustainably for food would benefit only a few individuals over an extremely short period of time.

I can understand the fishermen's perspective; they are simply trying to make a living and feed their families. Most of them are probably unaware that populations of the large marine species, including the manta rays and whale sharks, are not able to recover from this type of fishing pressure. If these populations continue to be harvested, they will soon be gone. Forever.

It is unlikely that you are aware of this growing problem, as I am positive that if you were it would have been STOPPED by now. Nevertheless, something needs to be done, NOW, before it is too late. These outrageous activities have caused notable declines to be reported in the biodiversity of your oceans over the last decade and, if this situation continues, tourism will be soon to follow this shocking trend.

You need to ACT NOW! MAKE the change happen and PROTECT these valuable species! Don't delay in protecting your country's FUTURE.

I hope you do take my thoughts into consideration when reevaluating the conservation status of these extraordinary animals; they DESERVE to be protected.

Sincerely,

_____ Home Country _____