



**Maasai International
Solidarity Alliance**

MISA rejects statement of Frankfurt Zoological Society

01 December 2025: MISA rejects the [press statement](#) issued by Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) on 20 September 2025 as it presents distorted and incorrect information. MISA also condemns the appointment of a lead lobbyist for trophy hunting as new head of the FZS Tanzania.

Over the past three years, MISA tried to engage with FZS to change their problematic approach to conservation in the greater Serengeti ecosystem in northern Tanzania. The latest exchange took place in September 2025 at FZS headquarter in Frankfurt, Germany. A day after the meeting, FZS issues a problematic statement. We see the need to clarify and correct this FZS narrative:

(1) FZS rejects any “direct or indirect” involvement of the restructuring of Ngorongoro District that included the forceful annexation of 1500 km² of Maasai land. This is not true. MISA has repeatedly detailed the **problematic involvement of FZS in the forceful annexation of 1.500 km² Maasai land** in 2022:

- a. Media reports underpin the knowledge from Maasai communities, highlighting that conservation funding from KfW and FZS has been tied to the annexation and “protection” of 1.500 km² today known as Pololeti.
- b. After the annexation, FZS has been a key actor in designing a new District Land Use Framework Plan (DLUFP). As the Tanzanian government needed a justification of annexation of land taken by force, the DLUFP was meant to formalize the illegal annexation (and weaken the status of the Maasai in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area). The proposal is publicly available, FZS funded this plan (with KfW money) and participated with three people in the technical team that prepared the plan. The plan was rejected by the Councilors of Ngorongoro.
- c. In September 2023, in a letter to the director of FZS, the Councilors of Ngorongoro District detail again the problematic role of FZS in the land annexation and conflicts and demand from director Schenck: „In conclusion, we kindly **request that you abandon all operations in Ngorongoro District** as it is in our considered view not in the interest of our community nor of our resources.” Until today, this clear call remains ignored by FZS who is still involved in land use and forest management activities including demarcations.
- d. In January 2025, Councilors from Ngorongoro District demanded again and in person from BMZ and FZS: „**Enough is enough!**” – no more conservation funding in their area.
- e. Moreover, FZS is an affiliate member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Just in October 2025 IUCN [officially proposed](#) to declare Pololeti as World Heritage site.

- (2) MISA also rejects the **narrative presented by FZS of implementing projects in a very participatory or community-based approach**. A key critique of Maasai is that FZS is implementing projects in collaboration with the District Government, not with the Maasai communities on the ground. Through this top-down approach, Maasai feel frequently forced to implement projects or accept their presence. Moreover, many Maasai on the ground lack adequate information about FZS projects in their villages. Also, in meetings with FZS such information is not shared. This includes information on FZS activities around village land use plans and forest management in Loliondo. These issues have been tabled again at the meeting. Until today FZS did not reply to this information.
- (3) In January 2025, MISA presented FZS the **Maasai Conservation Vision**, a collective effort to systematize key Maasai views and demands for a conservation model that promotes Maasai coexistence with wildlife instead of fighting the Maasai as threat to nature. In the recent Frankfurt meeting it became clear that FZS did not engage in any relevant manner with this vision, which reinforces the question, how meaningful the dialogues with FZS are, consuming a lot of time and resources.
- (4) At the meeting in Frankfurt, FZS also informed MISA about its **new Tanzanian country director**, Maurus Msuha. MISA is shocked about this development. Msuha was instrumental in crafting Multiple Land Use Report 2019 which proposed either zoning (including no-go-areas) or a total resettlement of Maasai in Ngorongoro. The report also captured FZS among other stakeholders who recommended the government to use social services as a means to force relocation. From 2021, the Tanzanian government has been weaponising social services to exert pressure on the Maasai. Further, as former Director of Wildlife Ministry of Natural Resource and Tourism, he headed the very department that was **responsible for the annexation of Pololeti** in 2022. Mr. Msuha also has a legacy as a **very active lobbyist for trophy hunting**. In the meeting, MISA was then shocked to learn that a key point of disagreement between FZS and the MISA Conservation Vision is our opposition to trophy hunting, which officials at FZS believe promotes conservation efforts.
- a. This staff policy of FZS confirms the unwillingness of FZS to rethink its local work and conservation approach. FZS further follows a path of fortress conservation and prioritizing trophy hunting /exclusive areas for trophy hunters.
 - b. In the light of this staff policy, MISA also interprets the [statement](#) of FZS linked in its press release on the brutal evictions of 2022 as merely paying lip service to human rights.

MISA has engaged in a dialogue with FZS since 2023. Importantly, it has always been MISA trying to engage with FZS and sometimes FZS even declined meetings. Not one single time did FZS approach MISA or send some update on controversial issues touching Maasai land in Ngorongoro. After almost three years of pro-active engagement, we do not see any relevant outcome of these dialogues for the Maasai on the ground. This makes us question the relevance and meaningfulness of engaging with FZS in further dialogue. With the new country director in Tanzania as a key proponent of the brutal evictions of the Maasai in 2022, such dialogue might even become impossible. MISA reiterates: **FZS should stop its conservation work on Maasai land!**

Contact: <https://misa-solidarity.org> and maasaiinternationalsolidarity@gmail.com