

14<sup>th</sup> July, 2016

Dear ,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organisations and individuals, are deeply concerned about the killing of elephants for the ivory trade and believe that to secure the survival of African elephants, immediate and resolute action must be taken to reduce the current levels of poaching as much as possible.

We therefore ask you to support a range State driven package of five proposals submitted to the forthcoming Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP 17) by the 29-member-state African Elephant Coalition (AEC) and other co-proponents.

These proposals are designed to afford all African elephants the highest level of international protection possible under CITES, to bring international and domestic ivory trade to an end, and to significantly reduce harmful trade in live elephants. Together the proposals in this package will send an unambiguous message that elephants are protected globally, and that buying ivory is, and will remain, unacceptable.

These measures reflect not only the will of the vast majority of African elephant range States but growing international public opinion in favour of protecting the elephant. Over the past five years 260 tonnes of ivory have been destroyed by more than 20 countries. During the last year numerous countries announced steps to close their domestic ivory markets. The United States has implemented a near-total ban on the domestic ivory trade, while China, the world's largest end market for ivory, has banned imports and will release a timetable to close its domestic market by the end of 2016. Hong Kong has also indicated that it will close its domestic market while France and Angola have announced domestic ivory trade bans.

The international community, including the EU, has signed a number of high-level government declarations and initiatives calling for an end to wildlife trafficking, the closure of domestic ivory markets, and support for demand reduction programmes. These include a United Nations General Assembly Resolution<sup>1</sup> and the London Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade<sup>2</sup>. On 20th June 2016 the EU Council adopted the conclusions of the Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking, including language that 'Urges particular Member States not to issue export or re-export documents for raw pre-Convention ivory from elephants on the basis of EU guidelines and to consider further measures to put a halt to commercial trade in ivory from elephants'.

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/69/314 *Tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife*, 30 July 2015

<sup>2</sup> *London Declaration on Illegal Wildlife Trade*, 13 February 2014

Despite these efforts, both globally and within the EU, we understand that the European Commission is currently opposing, for the most part, this pro-elephant package of proposals, thereby disregarding both the views of the vast majority of African elephant range states and public opinion.

The African elephant is a single migratory species with populations shared by many countries, for example 60 percent of Namibia's population is shared with Angola, Botswana and Zambia. African elephant populations have suffered a marked decline of at least 61 percent in the last 33 years. Relaxation of a previous effective ivory trade ban by allowing two "one-off" sales of ivory stockpiles, and in particular the sale of ivory to China in 2008, have driven a devastating increase in both poaching and seizures of illegal ivory over the last decade. In just three years, between 2010 and 2012, 100,000 elephants were killed in Africa for their ivory. While Southern African populations were formerly considered safe, poaching now affects all regions in Africa. The CITES MIKE Programme reported on 8th June 2016 that there has been a 'substantial increase' of 141 percent in the proportion elephant mortality resulting from illegal killing in the Kruger National Park in South Africa and an increase of 69 percent in Chewore, Zimbabwe.

The current moratorium on submission of proposals for renewed ivory trade, established in 2007, will expire in 2017. A solution is urgently needed that implements clear rules banning further commercial trade in ivory. With some countries having lost over half their elephant populations in the last six years, an unequivocal, uniform ban, achieved by restoring all elephant populations to Appendix I, closing domestic markets and terminating discussions of ivory trade in the future, is the only way to address the current crisis, before it is too late.

At the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the CITES Parties (CoP 14) held in The Hague in 2007, the EU took the position that the core concerns regarding African elephants should be resolved by African countries themselves. The current package of five proposals presented to CoP 17 does exactly what the EU called for - it represents the united views of most African elephant range States that there should be an unequivocal ban on international trade in ivory and closure of domestic ivory markets. We urge the EU to respect, and demonstrate, its commitment to support African countries in managing their elephant populations by supporting this package of proposals.

We most respectfully urge the European Union to show solidarity with, and to respect the will of, the majority of African elephant range States in their efforts to overcome the scourge of poaching, which robs communities of their future heritage on a daily basis. The European Union must send the clearest possible signal to poachers, traders, and consumers that trade in ivory is unacceptable and that the African elephant deserves the highest level of international protection possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Case". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sally Case  
Co-Chair  
Elephant Working Group  
Species Survival Network

Chief Executive Officer of the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation

On behalf of the following:

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