

5 April 2018

Jaison Basil

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

“Submission for Parliamentary inquiry into trade in elephant ivory and rhino horn”

Dear Madam or Sir,

I would like to thank the Committee for undertaking the inquiry into the trading of elephant and rhino ivory in Australia. This is a welcomed inquiry that highlights the Government’s ethical commitment to protecting the vulnerable animals for the current and future generations. This particular topic should be extended to all ivory products, and Australia needs to support the international developments on the ban of ivory products.

The past two years have seen an increase in international momentum to ban ivory: following a joint announcement on ivory bans by the USA and China in September 2015, the USA brought in a ban on ivory in July 2016, and China imposed a 3-year ban on ivory imports, promising a timeline for a complete ban by the end of 2016. Hong Kong, one of the biggest hubs of the illegal wildlife trade, announced in June 2016 that it will move towards a ban. France announced a ban on ivory trade in all its territories in April 2016.

The following will elaborate “my support for continuing the ban against imports and create stronger bans on domestic trading of ivory consistent with international developments.”

The problem

Tens of thousands of elephants are still being slaughtered every year for their ivory. This rate of poaching is pushing African elephants ever closer to extinction, and the window of opportunity for saving them is rapidly shrinking. Since poaching for the ivory trade is the most pressing threat facing Africa’s elephants and rhinos, the closure of all ivory markets, both international and domestic, is critical for their survival.

Global ivory trade and poaching accounts for almost \$15 to 20 billion annually. Illegal trade in wildlife is a lucrative market for criminals¹, and one of the highest value illicit trade sectors in the world². In recent years, there has been a surge in demand for ivory products. This surge in demand has largely come from east and south-east Asian markets³.

The results of the Great Elephant Census – the first aerial census of Africa’s elephant populations – revealed that one-third of Africa’s elephants were wiped out in just seven years (2007 to 2014) – equivalent to 144,000 elephants. Between 2010 and 2012 alone, over 100,000 elephants were brutally slaughtered for their ivory. The poaching continues today across much of Africa, with some countries seeing an increase in illegal killings.

¹ United Nations Environmental Protection. (2016). *Illegal Trade in Wildlife Fact Sheet*, Retrieved from http://www.unep.org/documents/itw/ITW_fact_sheet.pdf

² University of Oxford, Oxford Martin School. (2016). *Programmes: Illegal Wildlife Trade*, Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/research/programmes/illegal-wildlife-trade/about>

³ European Commission. (2016). *Analysis and Evidence in support of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking*, Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016SC0038>

International agreements

An international agreement in 1989 to ban international trade in ivory was brought in under the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna*⁴ (CITES). This agreement listed African elephant ivory on Appendix I to the Convention. However, this did not affect domestic markets, which were allowed to continue and did so in many countries, including Australia.

CITES's aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. Widespread information nowadays about the endangered status of many prominent species, such as the tiger and elephants, might make the need for such a convention seem obvious.

Annually, international wildlife trade is estimated to be worth billions of dollars and to include hundreds of millions of plant and animal specimens. The trade is diverse, ranging from live animals and plants to a vast array of wildlife products derived from them, including food products, exotic leather goods, wooden musical instruments, timber, tourist curios and medicines. Levels of exploitation of some animal and plant species are high and the trade in them, together with other factors, such as habitat loss, is capable of heavily depleting their populations and even bringing some species close to extinction.

International developments on the ban

The **United Kingdom Government** announced plans to ban the sale of 'worked' ivory produced since 1947 in September 2016. Internationally, the Conference of Parties to CITES accepted a non-binding resolution to phase out domestic ivory markets in October 2016. Trade in ornaments and works of art dating prior to 1947, classified as 'antique', and would be permitted.

In October 2017 the Government announced that it proposed to introduce a ban on the sale of all ivory in order to "bring an end to elephant poaching". It opened a 12-week consultation in October. The ban would include four categories of exemption, including the sale of musical instruments containing ivory. The Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997 (as amended) enforces CITES in the UK and provides for criminal offences. Under the regulations, the maximum penalty upon conviction is a five year prison sentence, a level five fine or both.

In September 2015, then **United States of America's** President Barack Obama and **China's** President Xi Jinping together pledged to enact "near complete bans" on the import and export of ivory. In June 2016 the US Government introduced new regulations and at the end of 2016, China announced that it would introduce a ban on all ivory trade and processing activities by the end of 2017.

In October 2016, the 17th CITES Conference of Parties accepted a non-binding resolution to phase out domestic ivory markets. This was praised by conservation groups, such as the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

References

- Ares, E. and Pratt, A. (2017). *Trade in ivory: UK and international policy and regulation*. United Kingdom Government House of Commons Library. Assessed from <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7875/CBP-7875.pdf>
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wile Fauna and Flora. (2018). *What is CITES?*. Retrieved from <https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>
- European Commission. (2016). *Analysis and Evidence in support of the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking*, Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016SC0038>
- United Nations Environmental Protection. (2016). *Illegal Trade in Wildlife Fact Sheet*, Retrieved from http://www.unep.org/documents/itw/ITW_fact_sheet.pdf
- University of Oxford, Oxford Martin School. (2016). *Programmes: Illegal Wildlife Trade*, Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/research/programmes/illegal-wildlife-trade/about>

Attached are few photos found online illustrating the devastating effects.

⁴ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wile Fauna and Flora. (2018). *What is CITES?*. Retrieved from <https://cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>





