

Clerk to Bills Committee on Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill 2017

Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Honourable Legislators,

I submitted this letter to the Committee and each political party, prior to the previous Legco session on the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill 2017. I prepared my submission myself and trust that it counts as a submission as part of this overall process (I understand duplicates are not acceptable). If my submission was recognised earlier, then I trust it remains valid. If not, please consider this letter as my submission.

In writing this letter, I appeal to your humanity and your stewardship responsibility to do the right thing for the people of this planet – us, our children and future generations – and the environment and its species.

Elephants are an endangered species and they have just as much of a right to live on planet Earth as we do. Our environment and the species and habitats that are part of their ecosystem need them to maintain a healthy balance in the circle of life. There is NOT one good reason to support the barbaric, inhumane and environmentally unsustainable slaughter of elephants for their tusks to be used as decorative ivory, which no one needs or has a right to possess. The irony is that the elephants are endangered and any action that supports their slaughter is economically unsustainable (not to condone this in anyway as ethical business). Did you read Dr Seuss' brilliant book about the tragedy of the commons when you were a child? When the elephants are gone, and they will be if you don't help stop the slaughter, there will be no more money to be made unethically and illegally and all of life on Earth will suffer.

I urge you to think about your conscience, look in the mirror, talk about it with your family and children, and remember your responsibility to society and this world as a politician, as a representative of the best interests of our society.

At the vote in Legco, please, please, please:

- 1) support the government's ban on the import, re-export and possession of pre-Convention ivory for commercial purposes;
- 2) increase penalties for wildlife crime; and importantly
- 3) oppose any suggestion of compensation that will encourage traders to stockpile illegal ivory, fueling the poaching and decimation of the remaining elephants.

**Please support these actions and do the right thing, for all the reasons below:**

- Hong Kong's 'legal' trade in pre-Convention ivory has been administered through a licensing system that has provided a front for laundering illegal ivory.

- Traders have been found to replenish old ivory stocks with newly poached ivory. Without expensive scientific analysis, it's impossible to distinguish 'legal' Pre-Convention ivory from 'illegal' ivory from poaching.
- The majority of the stock registered with the government in the 1990s (85%) was from illegal sources.
- Today, ivory poaching has reached unprecedented levels driven by demand in Asia. If nothing is done, the African elephant populations in the wild will become extinct in our lifetime.
- The illegal ivory trade impacts wildlife tourism economically, not to mention the tragic deaths of park rangers annually who work tirelessly in great danger to save the elephants from the heavily-armed poachers.
- The global support for closing ivory markets is clear, 183 countries/territories of CITES are unified in closing domestic markets that contribute to poaching or illegal trade in ivory.
- There is no deterrent sentencing in Hong Kong with respect to wildlife crime and penalties are minimal.

**Please do not support proposals for any compensation to ivory traders, for all the reasons below:**

- The ivory traders have been forewarned for 27 years to prepare and sell their ivory and they have an additional 5-year grace period once the legislation comes into force (which is way too long anyway in my opinion).
- Most traders do not rely on just ivory for their income.
- People who have speculated and stored ivory, can sell this ivory now, they do not need to be compensated (the proposed ban was announced 15 months ago and is not envisaged to be fully in place until December 2021).
- No other country has provided compensation and China will not do so when its ban comes into force at the end of this year.
- Compensation can motivate dishonest traders in Hong Kong to increase their ivory stock in the short term from illegal sources, before the ban becomes effective. Thus increasing future compensation payments and having a perverse impact, i.e. fueling poaching.
- This will also immediately send a signal to the illegal ivory trade that there is a finite period between the legislation passing and coming in to force, where they can poach ivory to supply the Hong Kong trade - thus again fueling poaching.
- Public funds, should not be made available to any industries or trades which are adversely affected by changes in economic or commercial circumstances when they have been repeatedly forewarned over decades. What the traders are doing is illegal and immoral, and should not be supported.

I urge you please to stand up for what is right. If you do not support this ban, you will be partly to blame for the extinction of the elephants. Please be part of the solution that helps save the elephants and life on Earth.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Copeland  
Permanent Resident living in Hong Kong for over 20 years