



Ivory Ban Hong Kong
Daniel LEONG to: bc_06_16

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Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I am writing in concern about the increasingly urgent problem of illegal ivory trade in Hong Kong. The trade of ivory is resulting in the deaths of thousands of endangered elephants per year and Hong Kong is one of the main hubs for the sale and transport of ivory. The inhumane slaughter of these elephants are severely damaging to Africa's ecosystem and has caused irreparable destruction to its environment and biodiversity.

It is shocking that Hong Kong is Asia's world city but still has the world's largest market for ivory. According to WWF's study conducted in 2015, Hong Kong is in possession of 72 Ivory retailers with over 30,000 ivory items. This figure is more than double the amount that the 2nd highest Ivory industry (Bangkok) has.

Furthermore, the traders and sellers of ivory are known to illegally replenish their stockpiles by exploiting legal loopholes as the ivory stock in HK has not declined significantly despite a high demand and sales. The purchase of ivory is largely because of Chinese tourists from the mainland (90% of Ivory in HK are purchased by mainland tourists according to AFCD) and many of the purchases are smuggled out to Macau and other places.

It is clear that this issue of utmost importance should be addressed promptly and harshly. I would like to suggest some ways that this could happen:

- Impose harsher sentences and deterrents on those caught illegally importing/exporting/selling or possessing ivory. Currently, the ordinance states a \$5,000,000 HKD fine and up to 2 years imprisonment, however, many traders get away with a \$60,000 fine. This should be changed to a much higher penalty and harsher prison sentences.
- More watchdogs and regular inspections of ivory traders and further hiring of immigration officers and sniffer dogs to stop the smuggling and import/export of ivory. There are laws in HK that Ivory licenses have to be conspicuously displayed but many are hidden or have key information blacked out. This needs to change and there need to be further license checks each month.
- Mainland tourists and Hong Kongers that buy ivory need to be better educated on the harmful effects that it has on the endangered and nearly extinct elephants. If more people knew about the plight of these creatures and cared for them, they would change their attitudes instead of buying them for vanity and cosmetic purposes.
- The government needs to share more information with the public on ivory sales and be more transparent about the trade and import/export of ivory. Consumers are unable to buy from trusted sources and may instead buy from illegal sellers.

The complete ban of ivory would be a huge step to improving Hong Kong's status in the world economy and boost the respectability of HK. If this matter is not resolved soon, these beautiful animals may soon be extinct. It is our civic duty to do whatever we can to care for them and help save these amazing creatures. I strongly support the government's ban on Ivory and request more measures to be implemented.

Thank you for your attention and time.

Yours Faithfully,
 Daniel Leong
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