



Att: Chairperson, Hong Kong Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs, Ms Tanya Chan

Re: Please Support the Hong Kong Government's Ivory Trade Ban

Dear Ms Chan,

16 March 2017

The undersigned 43 organisations are writing to you on a matter of great importance: **We request that you vote in support of the Hong Kong Government's proposed legislation to ban the Hong Kong ivory trade and that you encourage the government to phase out this trade as soon as possible and to increase the maximum penalties for wildlife crime.**

Poaching for the ivory trade is the main threat facing elephants. The Great Elephant Census in 2016 revealed a huge decline of 30% in African savannah elephants between 2007 and 2014. Poaching also threatens the survival of elephants in Asia. Elephant poaching costs human lives, particularly those of wildlife rangers trying to protect them, and has been linked to organized crime, armed militias and regional terrorist groups. It results in economic, social and political disruption, damaging local communities and inhibiting tourism in developing countries.

Hong Kong has drawn much attention as the city with the world's largest legal ivory retail market, and as a key destination for ivory from poached elephantsⁱ. As actions are increasingly being taken around the world to close domestic ivory markets and destroy stockpiles of seized and confiscated ivory, the world now looks to Hong Kong lawmakers to take urgent action to end the city's ivory trade.

Elephant poaching, ivory trafficking and corruption won't stop while legal domestic markets for ivory remain open. The international community has recognized this. In 2016 two important resolutions were adopted, at the Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, calling on all governments to close their domestic ivory markets. The vast majority of African range States have urged for an end to all ivory trade and the closure of all domestic markets. This position is also supported by many Asian countries. In September 2015, at a high-level meeting at the White House in Washington, D.C., the Presidents of China and the United States, pledged to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic ivory trade in their respective markets. The United States has since implemented an almost complete ban, while the Chinese government in December 2016 committed to close its domestic ivory market by 31 December 2017.

Hong Kong's Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying pledged to ban the Hong Kong ivory trade in January 2016ⁱⁱ. However, Hong Kong's ban will not come into effect until 2021, a phase out period that we consider far too long. We are deeply concerned that continuing ivory trade in Hong Kong for another four years will undermine global efforts to reduce trafficking and demand by continuing to provide a route through which ivory from poached elephants is laundered, further fuelling the killing.

We therefore request Hong Kong lawmakers to vote for the Hong Kong government's legislation to ban ivory trade, and to encourage them to phase it out as soon as possible, and preferably within a timeframe similar to that adopted by the Chinese government's.

A phase out in line with China's commitment to halt ivory trade becomes even more important when considering that visitors from mainland China comprise an estimated 90% of Hong Kong's ivory consumersⁱⁱⁱ.

Hong Kong lawmakers can now help to end the elephant poaching crisis and restore the health of tourism-based economies and communities in Africa devastated by poaching. **We respectfully request you to support the Hong Kong ivory ban, to urge for a phase-out as soon as possible, and to call on the Hong Kong public to stop buying ivory.**

Yours sincerely,

Christoph Schmidt, Chairman, **Pro Wildlife**

On behalf of the following organisations:

Peter Fearnhead, CEO, **African Parks**

Kaddu Kiwe Sebunya, President, **African Wildlife Foundation**

Cynthia J Moss, PhD, Director and Founder, **Amboseli Trust for Elephants**

Jill Robinson, Founder & CEO, **Animals Asia Foundation**

Ericka Ceballos, President, **Animal Conservation Welfare Foundation** and **CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society**

Angie Greenaway, Executive Manager, **Animal Defenders International**

Richard Bonham, Director of Operations, **Big Life Foundation**

Mark Jones, Associate Director, MEAs and UK Wildlife, **Born Free Foundation**

Borys Kala, Chair, **CEEweb for Biodiversity CITES Working Group**

Sarah Uhlemann, International Program Director, **Center for Biological Diversity**

Kedar Gore, Director, **The Corbett Foundation**

Angela Sheldrick, Chief Executive Officer, **The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust**

Oliver Smith, CEO, **David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation**

Allan Thornton; President; **Environmental Investigation Agency US**

Ilaria Di Silvestre, Programme Leader Wildlife, **Eurogroup for Animals**

Ofir Drori, Founding Director, **EAGLE Network** and **Last Great Ape Association**

Andrea Crosta, Executive Director, **Elephant Action League**

Michele Pickover, Director, **EMS Foundation**

Teresa M. Telecky, Ph.D., Director, Wildlife Department, **Humane Society International**

Audrey Delsink, Executive Director, **Humane Society International-Africa**

Masayuki Sakamoto, Executive Director, **Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund**

Jonathan Vaughan, Executive Director, **Lilongwe Wildlife Trust**

Tamas Papp, President, **Milvus Group - Bird and Nature Protection Association**

Marcelle Meredith, Executive Director, **National Council of SPCAs in South Africa**

Jim Ries, President, **One More Generation**

Reinhard Behrend, President, **Rainforest Rescue**

Thomas Töpfer, Chairman, **Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas**

Andrzej Kepel, President, **Salamandra**

Bittu Sahgal, Founder, **Sanctuary Nature Foundation**

Iain Douglas-Hamilton, Founder, **Save The Elephants**

Ulrich Karlowski, **Society for Dolphin Conservation**

Will Travers, President, **Species Survival Network**

Trevor Jones, PhD, Director, **STEP - Southern Tanzania Elephant Program**

John Stephenson, CEO, **Stop Ivory**

Alex Hafford, **WildAid Hong Kong**

Susan Lieberman, Ph.D., Vice President International Policy, **Wildlife Conservation Society**

Tom Taylor, Assistant Director, **Wildlife Friends Foundation**



National Council of SPCAs



South Africa



Julie Sherman, Executive Director, **Wildlife Impact**
Prof. Md. Anwarul Islam, Chief Executive, **WildTeam**
Zhonghua Zhao, Director, **World Animal Protection China**



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Wildlife Friends Foundation



ⁱ WWF-Hong Kong 2015: The Hard Truth: How Hong Kong's Ivory Trade is Fuelling Africa's Elephant Poaching Crisis; WildAid (2015), The Illusion of Control: Hong Kong's 'Legal' Ivory Trade; Elephant Action League (2015), Blending Ivory: China's old loopholes, new hopes.

ⁱⁱ <http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2016/eng/p204.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://savetheelephants.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2015HongKongIvoryReport.pdf>