
Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V.
Bodenschwinghstraße 30
50170 Kerpen



Telefon: 0700/52626354
Telefax: 0700/JAMBOELI
E-Mail: vorstand@reaev.de
Internet: www.reaev.de

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Ms Tanya Chan
Chair of the LegCo Environmental Panel
HONG KONG
info@tanyachan.hk; panel_ea@legco.gov.hk

Support of Government's Proposal for an Ivory Trade Ban in Hong Kong

Dear Madam Chairman

We are writing to you as we are convinced that the a.m. proposed ivory trade ban in Hong Kong is absolutely necessary to save one of the greatest beasts on earth, the elephant. Therefore we urgently ask you to support your government's proposal, in order not only to ban the ivory trade as soon as possible, may it concern raw ivory or carved ivory products, but also to increase the penalties for illegal wildlife trade to a maximum.

A recent survey shows that there are only around 350,000 elephants left in the savannahs of Africa. This means a decline of almost 30 % since 2007. (1) Within only three years (2010 - 2012) 100,000 elephants were killed for their ivory, while ivory prices in China have tripled in the four years between 2009 and 2014. (2)

The forest elephants of central Africa have faced an even more dramatic decline: Between 2002 and 2013 65 % of all forest elephants have been killed for the illegal ivory trade.

Mozambique has lost almost half of its elephant population within the last five years, Tanzania lost more than 60 % of all their elephants. Angola's elephant population experienced the worst decrease from around 200,000 elephants before the civil war to only 3,400 animals today. (1)

This horrible decline in elephant numbers is driven mainly by the demand for ivory products in mainland China and Hong Kong.

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The world will lose all elephants within very few years if poaching will go on as it is at present and if nations are not reacting strongly to this catastrophic situation.

Last year, the President of the United States banned the sale of ivory, and Europe will issue an export ban on all ivory within several months and is considering a national trade ban, too.

However, the biggest demand for ivory is still in Asia, especially in China and Hong Kong, as studies say, whereas "Hong Kong is a primary transit hub for the movement of illicit ivory into mainland China." (3). Another study finds that "all imports of ivory into Hong Kong, both raw and worked, are illegal with few exceptions." (4)

Mainland China as the biggest market for illegal ivory has already announced to close its domestic ivory market until the end of 2017. Therefore it is most important that Hong Kong will follow this decision and support it by shutting down its local ivory market, too. Not to follow China in this decision would undermine the efforts of the mainland to tackle the illegal ivory trade.

Moreover, a survey in the Hong Kong public has shown that an overwhelming majority (75 %) supports an ivory sales ban. Actually, around 90 % of all ivory buyers in Hong Kong come from mainland China and take the ivory home illegally. (6)

However, as elephant numbers are plunging with breathtaking speed, a five-year-plan as proposed by Hong Kong, would risk the lives of further hundreds of thousands of elephants. Therefore we urge you to not only support the local ivory ban but to strongly press for a much shorter timeline. What mainland China can do within one year, Hong Kong will be able to do as well.

Hong Kong just recently destroyed its seized ivory stocks completely which is a very good first step, but more illegal ivory is entering Hong Kong day by day. Every single piece of ivory means an illegally killed elephant, and every purchase of ivory is a demand for another dead elephant. Are jewellery or chopsticks made out of ivory worth the extinction of a precious animal species? We are convinced that you will agree with us about the answer: No, not at all!

Furthermore, scientists just recently found out that the extinction of elephants could lead to rapid environmental changes and worsen climate change drastically. (5)

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Please help our planet and save the elephants of this world by voting positively for your government's proposal to ban all ivory trade and to shorten the steps to close the market within much less than five years.

Thanking you very much we remain with best regards

Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V.
Save Africa's Elephants



Thomas Toepfer
Chairman

and all Members of the Board

(1) <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/08/wildlife-african-elephants-population-decrease-great-elephant-census/>

(2) <http://www.savetheelephants.org/about-ste/press-media/?detail=2028>
http://savetheelephants.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2014_ChinaConservationChallenge.pdf

(3) <http://elephantleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/EAL-BLENDING-IVORY-Report-Dec2015.pdf>

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

(5) <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/pets-and-environment/130916/loss-of-elephants-megaherbivores-could-lead-to-rapid-environmental-changes-study.html>

https://www.conservationjobs.co.uk/articles/extinction-of-large-animals-may-worsen-climate-change/?ref=newsletter&ref_id=39

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/12/ivory-trade-elephants-future-forest-poachers>

(6) http://www.wildaid.org/sites/default/files/resources/WildAid%20Ivory%20Consumption%20report_POP.pdf