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22 March 2017

Ms Tanya Chan  
Chair, Environmental Affairs Panel  
Hong Kong Legislative Council

Dear Ms Chan,

### **THE HONG KONG SAR GOVERNMENT'S IVORY TRADE BAN**

I am writing to you as Chair of the African Elephant Coalition (AEC), an alliance of 29 African countries committed to the survival of African elephants free from the threat of international ivory trade. I would like to commend the Government of Hong Kong SAR for taking an important and encouraging step in proposing legislation to ban the ivory trade. Our Coalition is deeply concerned about the elephant poaching crisis. The Great Elephant Census published in 2016 showed that savannah elephants have declined by 30% between 2007 and 2014. This census followed the publication of an extensive study in 2013 showing that forest elephants declined by 62% in the preceding decade.

As I'm sure you are aware, poaching for the ivory trade has destabilized some of our member countries. Links to organized crime, trafficking in other illegal goods and natural resources, and the involvement of armed militias and terrorist groups have resulted in economic, social and political disruption. Local communities have suffered and tourism is being affected. Above all, we have lost a great many human lives in the fight to save our elephants from being killed for their ivory.

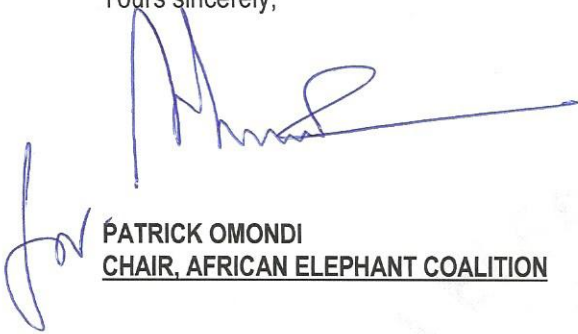
At the CITES conference in September-October 2016 in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Coalition proposed the closure of all domestic ivory markets, the listing of all African elephants in Appendix I, and the improved management and where possible the destruction of ivory stockpiles. As a result CITES recommended that *"all Parties and non-Parties in whose jurisdiction there is a legal domestic market for ivory that is contributing to poaching or illegal trade, take all necessary legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory as a matter of urgency"*.

Shortly after this ground breaking decision by CITES, China made the welcome announcement on 30 December 2016 to end the processing and trade of ivory and ivory products by 31 March and to close the ivory trade by the end of 2017. This bold move will undoubtedly help us in our struggle to save the elephants. We understand that the current proposal by the Hong Kong Government would allow a phase-out period so the ban would not come fully into effect until 2021. While the Government's proposal is indeed a welcome development given Hong Kong's key role in the ivory trade, a lengthy

phase-out period risks hindering our efforts to stop poaching. A shorter time period more aligned with China's would be the most beneficial. I would therefore like to appeal to the Environmental Affairs Panel to support the Government's proposed ban, but to consider phasing out the ivory trade within a shorter period, taking into account the CITES recommendation that measures to close domestic markets for raw and worked ivory should be taken "*as a matter of urgency*".

Hong Kong SAR has a critical role to play. By working together and keeping the momentum moving forward, I believe we can end the threat of the ivory trade and protect elephants in Africa and Asia for future generations.

Yours sincerely,



**PATRICK OMONDI**  
**CHAIR, AFRICAN ELEPHANT COALITION**

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