



SUBMISSION to:

The Legislative Council of the  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region - Panel on Environmental Affairs

On behalf of:

AquaMeridian Conservation & Education Foundation  
Global March for Elephants and Rhinos.

## SAVE THE ELEPHANT! NO MORE IVORY!

### Background

As a Hong Kong based charity with global vision, AquaMeridian aims to protect and preserve endangered species through education; changing cultural habits that are detrimental to biodiversity.

We are also the Hong Kong representatives of the Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, a coalition of voices from all walks of life and over 130 cities all over the world.

Our work takes us to other countries for research and to better understand related issues. It is hurtful to see our fellow countrymen ridiculed as environmentally irresponsible, but understandable given the inextricable connection between disappearing species and a growing prosperity in China which exacerbates its insatiable demand for ivory, shark fin, rhino horn, pangolin parts, and Helmeted Hornbill casques to name but a few.

Clearly, a change in the perception of a population's self-interest is vital to a change in attitudes and habits. Hong Kong has for almost 200 years been an entrepot of trade as well as ideas. Shamefully, the then-Colony, now-S.A.R. played a key role in the ivory trade. Now Hong Kong has an opportunity to redeem ourselves and lead our country with progressive policies regarding the protection of endangered species.

### Context

Culturally, we Chinese admire the elephant for its strength, wisdom, and kindness yet we have been complicit in the animal's global decimation solely because of greed. For future generations, elephant extinction will mean an irreparable loss. For those who believe in karma, (a basic tenet of Chinese culture) this also does not bode well for ourselves and our descendants. And unless we do something now, we are collectively to blame.

Today we are gathered to discuss Hong Kong's ivory ban and related issues. Beijing is banning the ivory trade and is not offering compensation to mainland traders. HK traders have known of the elephant crisis for over 30 years, since the first phase out of merchandise was initiated in the late 80's. There are no longer any ivory traders, factories, or carvers that rely solely on ivory. They have had ample time to phase out and diversify their businesses.



## Recommendations

Global voices for elephants do not believe the HK govt should compensate ivory traders for their stocks. Especially since reports by EIA and Greenpeace UK in 1991 have shown that up to 80% of ivory in circulation in Hong Kong at the time of the 1989 international ivory ban were from illegal sources in the first place. However, the more critical issue at hand is the effective curtailment of the ivory trade and its strict enforcement. Right here in Hong Kong! Right now!

Strict enforcement can be combined with some policy flexibility. Should the government choose to compensate, it is important that traders completely surrender their stockpiles.

- 1) Surrendered stockpiles should be subject to laboratory testing/s to verify origin/s.
- 2) For tests proving ivory isn't old stock, sufficient verification should be required to demonstrate legal provenance.
- 3) The costs of such testing, for stockpiles found to be illegal, should be recovered from the offending merchant, with additional fines as appropriate (including jail-time for egregious offenders).

The monetary value attached to ivory cannot compare to the priceless loss of a species. AquaMeridian applauds the tireless efforts of the HK Customs in cracking down on the illegal wildlife trade. We thank the S.A.R. government for their timely attention to this important issue, however at the same time, we call for the government to be completely transparent with regard to the incineration of the seized or surrendered ivory stockpiles.

Thanks you for your attention to this urgent and important matter.

Yours faithfully,

Sharon Kwok Pong  
Executive Director