



Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, Inc.

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Honorable Legislative Council Secretariat
Honorable Members of the Legislative Council
The Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Panel on Environmental Affairs

Re: Legislative proposal to phase out the local trade in ivory and progress of Government's efforts on nature conservation and marine conservation

Dear Legislative Council Secretariat and Members of the Legislative Council:

Hong Kong holds a profoundly important position as a uniquely and historically placed trade portal to China and Western nations, and now to all nations, involved in the ivory trade. Hong Kong is also part of a special relationship of “one country, two systems” and is thereby independent under the executive, legislative, and judicial systems from those of China. As much as this dual system can have advantages, any divergent demonstration of Hong Kong's special status vis-à-vis China using an issue upon which an entire species' survival literally hangs in the balance is *not* to be wished. Without the help and strong proactive works of Hong Kong, China's current efforts, shutting down carving factories and announcing an end to trade by end of 2017, will not be enough to save elephants from their inevitable extinction in the face of ivory and other elephant “product” trade, habitat loss, and human-elephant conflict.

The population of elephants has dropped by 98.5% in just over 2 centuries (according to the National Geographic Society estimates and the Great Elephant Census of 2016). Nothing can undo the lost lives of millions of elephants, but Hong Kong can make an enormous positive difference now, while that population hangs in the balance.

This governing body can refuse to be made complicit middlemen in the Ivory trade, both legal and Black Market, by eliminating cover by laws permitting some trade. A global phenomenon, destructive trade in ivory and other “wildlife products” is not the sole responsibility of one administrative region, one country or one continent, but that of the entire international community. Any legalized domestic ivory trade contradicts and disrupts the rule of law in the region as a “side effect.” Legal trade masks the Black Market, and illegal markets in one area are accompanied by other dangerous criminal enterprises, such as trafficking in Arms, Drugs, and Human Beings. The same individuals and organizations are involved: only the “product” to be moved is different. The suffering, criminality, and disregard for the rule of Law remain the same.

Today, Hong Kong remains an important hub for the trade in ivory: as a location for carving, selling, and smuggling. This chamber holds the power to demand freedom from bloodshed and criminality that harms both human society and animal populations. If you are concerned for the ineffable values of Chinese culture that ivory carving represents, please consider that the continued use of ivory is an outmoded and regressive attack on both cultural values and the world ecology. Creativity, and even tradition, is not dependent upon materials but upon the artistry of people.

Please do the right thing for Hong Kong, and for the elephant populations remaining on the planet. Make the ivory trade a thing of the past. Pass the strongest possible laws against buying, selling, and trading ivory. Consign ivory to history, not elephants.

Sincerely,
GMFER Board of Directors

The mission of Global March for Elephants and Rhinos (GMFER) is to #MarchAgainstExtinction and demand that world leaders take action to STOP the poaching of elephants and rhinos and to END the trade in ivory and rhino horn.