



Re: Please support the ban on ivory trade with no compensation and maximum penalty for illicit wildlife traders

Kwok-Zu Lim to: panel_ea@legco.gov.hk

30/05/2017 00:13

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

In view of Hong Kong's legislative council's environmental panel to be held on 6th June, I am writing to respectfully urge the council to wholeheartedly support the Hong Kong Government's proposal to ban the ivory trade without compensation and with maximum penalty to offenders of illicit wildlife trade.

Moral and Ethical Obligation

Ivory trading finances terror in Africa, creating civil and social unrest with resultant immense human suffering. The intricate ties between wildlife crimes especially ivory trafficking and militia groups have been unequivocally proven.

Methods of ivory harvesting are inhumane and cruel. Killing elephants for tusks also disrupts the closely-knit social structures of elephant herds, with inevitable adverse consequences to the survival and psyches of the surviving herd members. Moreover, it is estimated that at the present poaching kill rate, elephants will be extinct by 2025.

Rangers protecting elephant herds are also casualties from well-armed poachers. A report by WWF estimated that 1000 of rangers have lost their lives in the line of duty in the past 10 years.

This is a moral and ethical issue. Hong Kong must cease to be part of ivory trading.

Maximum penalty for illegal wildlife trade

To deter future crimes against wildlife, I respectfully urge the council to support the proposal to increase the penalties for any illicit wildlife trade. This will inform the public and demonstrate leadership to other nations that Hong Kong is committed in her convictions in combating an often neglected and overlooked section of the law, that of crimes against wildlife.

Wildlife trafficking is not a minor league crime. Illicit wildlife trades are carried out by a large network of crime syndicates, with deep, powerful financial and corrupt political backing. Their agenda and activities threaten local governance, community stability and regional security. The degree of punishment must be severe enough to deter these well-funded criminals.

Compensation to ivory traders unjustifiable

CITES has already banned international trade of ivory in 1990. For the past 27 years, ivory traders in Hong Kong are still trading through loopholes in regulation or by stock-piling ivory. This undeservedly long grace period is in fact even further extended till 2021 as per the Hong Kong government's proposal, giving traders ample time to make good of their ivory stock or products. They have had their share of borrowed time on trade and do not deserve any compensation.

Compensation will in fact weaken Hong Kong's stance in phasing out the ivory trade, since there are proven illegalities involved in the ivory traded. Even if "legal", the ivory traded has involved unspeakable cruelty to elephants and incurred heavy social and human costs.

Trade ban by 2021 -- is it too late?

I believe my plea is just one of the millions in the global outcry against the elephant poaching crisis. Hong Kong is an important player in the transit and trade of wildlife products and your decisions will be crucial in the fight against the ivory trade.

It is estimated that 50 elephants are killed per day, and in 2011 alone, roughly one out of 12 African elephants was killed by a poacher. The deadline of 2021 for the ivory trade ban in Hong Kong might be too late for the elephants.

Hong Kong must hence, be unwavering in her commitment and political will in banning ivory trading. There must be no compromise in putting a stop to the gruesome slaughtering of elephants and inadvertently, supporting powerful crime syndicates and their terrorist activities. We must move, in what can only be described as a humane and positive step, toward supporting the government's proposal, and even bring the date of ivory ban forward.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Lim Kwok Zu

[Redacted signature block]



Hong Kong