



Testimony regarding ivory commerce

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to:

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I have spent the past five years working to reduce consumer demand for ivory. It was evident to me from the start of my efforts that reduction of demand was the key to saving Africa's elephants. Working through my education nonprofit, Multisensory Interactive Learning - Save the Elephants, we created over a dozen video spots intended for distribution on social media in China.

One spot, produced in both Cantonese and Mandarin, is viewable at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOIdW095Kgg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGmN-wQtmYs>

It was intended to alert potential ivory consumers that elephants do not drop their tusks and grow new ones, as deer regenerate their antlers. The consequences of ivory collection are mortal for the elephant.

We set up a website, ElephantHero.org, hosted in Hong Kong, to accompany the ad above. The goal was to offer viewers additional information on the subject and links to organizations they might support.

We worked with others in this effort to educate Chinese ivory consumers. Our partners included the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Save the Elephants and WildAid. We shared footage with these organizations as well as finished ads, and worked with them to advance distribution of the spots.

I also worked with the Sheldrick Trust to plan and execute the March for Elephants, coordinating with organizers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, London, Toronto and Munich.

We lobbied the US government and worked with state legislatures to outlaw ivory commerce. We worked to end circus performances by elephants in key US cities.

As a result of so many efforts, including the marches in scores of cities around the world, the PRC made what conservationists regard as the right decision and set a firm date for cessation of ivory carving and ivory commerce in Mainland China.

It is well known that Hong Kong retains a sizable inventory of ivory. It is also known that Hong Kong plays a crucial role in the illicit supply chain of blood ivory making its way to buyers there and in Mainland cities.

The nations of Africa (and Europe and North America) who have taken the step of destroying their ivory stockpiles have acted to end all possibility of commerce in this material. It is widely understood in the conservation community that the existence of any "legal" ivory trade acts as a smoke screen for an often larger trade in illegal ivory, blood ivory recently procured by slaughtering elephants across Africa.

It is also widely known that global criminal syndicates are key parts of this illegal trade. And that the profits from the trade are used to procure weapons for groups who threaten the stability of nations across the continent of Africa.

Therefore, the complete cessation of ivory trade is widely considered a precondition for security and stability, not to mention sustainable development, in Africa.

Hong Kong is a crucial piece of the global illicit ivory trade. To end this horror, Hong Kong must move swiftly and decisively to end all commerce, eliminate all ivory stocks, cease all carving and creation of value-added ivory goods, and enforce strict legal sanctions for any violation -- whether by smuggling, carving or selling ivory goods.

Hong Kong should do this swiftly. By 2021, another 100,000 elephants could be slaughtered if this trade doesn't end forthwith. That would be nearly one third of the remaining elephants of Africa.

There is no commercial benefit that could possibly be worth the harm to Africa's living legacy, or Hong Kong's good name, that would justify persisting in the blood ivory trade.

Please, the world community begs you, do not drag your feet. Take immediate and decisive steps to end ivory commerce. Show the world that Hong Kong is capable of the same dramatic and heroic leadership that has been shown by the People's Republic of China in this regard. Shut down your ivory showrooms. End your ivory carving. Arrest the kingpins and corrupt officials who suborn this heartbreaking and illicit trade. And stand proudly to your full height before the world.

With great respect and sincere good wishes,
Martin Perlmutter
President
The Multisensory Interactive Learning Institute - Save the Elephants