



Att: Hon. Tanya Chan - on behalf of The Nature Conservancy
Marine Thomas to: panel_ea@legco.gov.hk

01/06/2017 11:43

Dear Ms. Chan,

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy Hong Kong, and The Nature Conservancy Africa Program, I am writing to express the following support with regards to the proposed ivory ban in Hong Kong:

The Nature Conservancy supports the government's proposal to ban the import, re-export and possession of pre-Convention ivory for commercial purposes AND increase penalties for wildlife crime

Hong Kong's 'legal' trade in pre-Convention ivory has been administered through a licensing system that has provided a front for laundering illegal ivory. Evidence has shown that traders have been found to replenish old ivory stocks with newly poached ivory. Without expensive scientific analysis it is impossible to distinguish 'legal' Pre-Convention ivory from 'illegal' ivory from poaching. The majority of stock registered with the government in the 1990s (85%) was from illegal sources.

Today, ivory poaching has reached unprecedented levels driven by demand in Asia. If nothing is done, the African elephant populations in the wild will become extinct in our lifetime. The illegal ivory trade impacts wildlife tourism economically, in some of the poorest places on earth, not to mention the tragic deaths of park rangers annually.

The global support for closing ivory markets is clear, 183 countries/territories of CITES are unified in closing domestic markets that contribute to poaching or illegal trade in ivory. Hong Kong has the opportunity to take game changing action and stop its negative reputation of being a global wildlife trade hub.

2. We DO NOT support proposals for any compensation to ivory traders

Compensation for illegal ivory is morally wrong as it affects African nations that have lost millions in tourism revenue and spent millions fighting poaching, including families of many rangers killed by poachers, child victims of civil wars financed by ivory.

The ivory traders have been forewarned for 27 years to prepare and sell their ivory and they have an additional 5 year grace period once the legislation comes into force. People who have speculated and stored ivory, can sell this ivory now, they do not need to be compensated (the proposed ban was announced 15 months ago and is not envisaged to be fully in place until December 2021). No other country has provided compensation and China will not do so when their ban comes into force at the end of this year.

Compensation can motivate dishonest traders in Hong Kong to increase their ivory stock in the short term from illegal sources, before the ban becomes effective. Thus increasing future compensation payments and having a perverse impact i.e. fueling poaching. This will also immediately send a signal to the illegal ivory trade that there is a finite period between the legislation passing and coming in to force, where they can poach ivory to supply the Hong Kong trade - thus again fueling poaching.

We sincerely hope LegCo will act favorably on June 6th in light of these concerns,

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Marine Thomas

The Nature Conservancy

Conservation Manager

marine.thomas@tnc.org
(852) [REDACTED] (Phone)
(852) 3978-9799 (Fax)
(852) [REDACTED] (Mobile)

Unit 2107 Prosperity Millennia Plaza
663 King's Road
North Point, Hong Kong

The Nature
Conservancy 
大自然保護協會

Nature.org.hk