

**PUBLIC HEARING ON JUNE 6TH 2017:
Supporting the Hong Kong Government's Ivory Trade Ban**

5th June 2017

Hon Tanya Chan
Room 814, Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central, Hong Kong

Dear Hon Tanya Chan,

I am a long time Hong Kong resident and member of the medical community. I am writing in support of the Hong Kong Government's imminent legislative proposal concerning the ivory trade in Hong Kong. I fully support the government's phasing out and ultimate ban the ivory trade in the Special Administrative Region; and also to increase maximum penalties under the Protection of Endangered Species Ordinance Cap 586. However, I **cannot and do not** support any proposition to compensate traders or buy out their stocks of body parts (i.e. ivory).

i) Reasons For Supporting the Ivory Trade Ban in Hong Kong and Increasing Sentences

- Hong Kong's currently 'legal' trade in pre-Convention ivory has been administered through a licensing system that has provided a front for laundering illegal ivory.
- Traders have been revealed infusing their old 'legal' stockpiles of ivory with newly poached 'blood ivory'. Without expensive scientific analysis it has proved impossible to distinguish 'legal' Pre-Convention ivory from 'illegal' ivory from poaching.
- The majority of ivory stock registered with the government in the 1990s (85%) was from reportedly from illicit sources.
- Today, ivory poaching has reached unprecedented levels, driven by demand in Asia and often facilitated by traders in Hong Kong. If nothing is done, the African elephant populations in the wild will be extirpated within our lifetime.
- The illegal ivory trade has consequences for local communities, such as in Africa, where the deaths of elephants results in economic losses, i.e. undermining wildlife tourism. Further, Park Rangers around the world are brutally murdered, in their hundreds, protecting elephants and other precious species from poachers.
- There is global-scale support for shutting down ivory markets. 183 of the signatories to CITES have unanimously agreed to close domestic markets that contribute to poaching or illegal trade in ivory.
- There is currently no deterrent sentencing in Hong Kong with respect to wildlife crime and penalties are far too low.

ii) Reasons I Will Not Support Any Compensation for Traders or Any Government Buying of Ivory Stocks

- Ivory traders were warned 27 years of the eventuality of bills curbing the trade, and encouraged and supported to prepare and sell their ivory.
- Most traders do not rely on just ivory for their income.
- Individuals who have speculated and stockpiled their ivory, can sell this ivory now – they do not need to be compensated. The proposed ban was announced 16 months ago and they still have a 5-year grace period once the legislation comes into force.
- No other country has provided compensation and China has no plans to do so when their ban comes into force at the end of this year.
- Profits have motivated dishonest traders in Hong Kong to increase their ivory stock in the short term from illegal sources. Compensation would send a disastrous signal, and may encourage further stockpiling and license applications before the ban comes into effect. Introducing compensation payments may have the perverse effect of fuelling poaching.
- This will also immediately send a signal to the 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 fuelling poaching.
- Public funds, should not be made available to any industries or trades which have made poor investment choices. The fact that they have been adversely affected by changes in economic or commercial circumstances should not be compensated for with tax dollars. Considering the 27 years of warning that traders have had, it is ridiculous to provide unwise investors with handouts.

While I do not support compensation for these reasons, I do support investment in non-financial assistance programmes e.g. retraining for industry workers.

Yours sincerely,


Dr Donald Greig