



Public Hearing on June 6th 2017: Supporting the Hong Kong Government's Ivory Trade Ban

MAK, Diane to: panel_ea

06/06/2017 03:21

5th June 2017

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

Dear Hon Tanya Chan and other members of the LegCo Environmental Affairs Panel,

Public Hearing on June 6th 2017: Supporting the Hong Kong Government's Ivory Trade Ban

I am Diane Mak, a Year 13 student from Sha Tin College and Chair of my school's Environmental Council. On behalf of the Council, I am writing to express our support for the Government's proposal to ban ivory trade in Hong Kong, but also, and arguably more important, why we strongly oppose the compensation of ivory traders or the buying out of their stocks.

Any "legal" form of ivory trade, including Hong Kong's licensing system for the "legal" trade of pre-Convention ivory, simultaneously encourages poaching and illegal trade. Not only has this system provided a front for laundering illegal ivory, it also allows abuse of the system, as dishonest traders may easily claim newly poached ivory as part of old stocks, which also increases future compensation payments and having a perverse impact. Without sound and costly scientific analysis, it is extremely difficult to differentiate between "legal" pre-Convention ivory and ivory from poaching. Therefore, by banning ivory trade in Hong Kong, we – the Hong Kong people and its Government – are declaring a strong stance against the barbaric poaching of elephants, rather than merely chastising ivory traders without taking substantial action.

Having studied evolution and classification, here is a fun fact about African elephant, *L. africana*, and the Asian elephant, *E. maximus*: they are in a completely different genus – the African elephant's genus is *Loxodonta* whilst the Asian elephant's is *Elephas*. Scientists predict they diverged 5 million years ago. Ivory poaching has reached unprecedented levels today, and if nothing is done, African elephant populations will become extinct in our lifetime. Imagine a prehistoric animal evolving for 5 million years into the modern African elephant, only to be hunted down and become extinct in merely several centuries due to human behaviour. This is why we must ban all ivory trade.

As both a student of geography and biology, I am aware of the biological and ecological, as well as the socio-economic impacts of illegal ivory trade. The impending extinction of elephants would significantly impact the ecological balance and reduce biodiversity in sub-Saharan Africa and the African Savanna, but its effects are not limited to these areas. Illegal ivory trade impacts wildlife tourism economically, not to mention the tragic deaths of park rangers. According to Sean Willmore, the president of the International Ranger Federation, about 2 rangers are killed each week. Even if African governments place limits in an attempt to "sustainably" harvest ivory, other governments, our Government must too, be proactive and responsible, and ban ivory trade and implement harsher punishments. This is especially the case as ivory poaching has skyrocketed largely due to high-demand Asian markets.

In addition to banning ivory trade, I strongly oppose any compensation for traders or Government buying of ivory stocks. Compared to fishermen affected by the ban on bottom trawling in Hong Kong waters, most ivory traders do not just rely on ivory for their income. The source of ivory traders' product is also through inhumane poaching and slaughtering of elephants, rhinos, and other wildlife. Hence, they do not need to be compensated.

Public funds should not be made available to any industries or trades which are adversely affected by changes in economic or commercial circumstances when they have been repeatedly forewarned over decades. International trade in ivory has been banned for 27 years, serving as a forewarning for ivory traders to prepare and sell their stocks. The ban in Hong Kong is not envisaged to be fully implemented until December 2021. Together, this is more than enough time for people who have speculated and stored ivory to sell their ivory. Moreover, no other

country has provided compensation.

Ivory trade is more than an environmental issue – it is a moral issue. Again, on behalf of my school's Council, I am reiterating my support for the ivory trade ban, and opposing the compensation of traders. If you could just give 2 minutes of your precious time to visit <https://youtu.be/MWAJQEuYbTA?t=2m34s>, please watch this beautiful and remarkable story to remind you why we need to stop ivory trade and protect elephants and other wildlife under threat from illegal poaching.

Yours Sincerely,

Diane Mak 13D1
15makdr1@stconline.edu.hk
environmentalcouncil@stconline.edu.hk
Sha Tin College Environmental Council, Chair

All information in this message and attachments is confidential and may be legally privileged. Full details can be found [here](#).