



Animal Defenders International

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Ms Tanya Chan, Chairperson
Panel on Environmental Affairs
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Chan

Further to our previous letter, we are writing to extend our concerns for the future survival of elephants in the wild in light of proposals for compensation to ivory traders in the event of a ban. In consideration of the devastating impact the trade in ivory has on elephant populations, we urge you to support legislation proposed by the Hong Kong Government to phase out the domestic ivory trade, increase the penalties for wildlife crime and oppose any suggestions of compensation.

Poaching is a major threat to both African and Asian elephants in the wild. Classified as *Vulnerable* and *Endangered* respectively under the IUCN Red List, both species remain at high risk of extinction. There are documented to be around 352,271 savannah elephants remaining in Africa, far less than previously thought. The Asian elephant population is estimated to be 40-50,000 individuals.

The wildlife trade monitoring network, TRAFFIC, report that legal ivory sales "are considered to provide an opportunity for the laundering of poached ivory....while also stimulating demand in consumer markets".

As the world's largest legal ivory retail market, Hong Kong is a key destination for ivory poached from elephants. Illegal trade is facilitated by international criminal networks; it is fuelled by and aids corruption, undermines security and the rule of law, and can even provide funding to those involved with militia and terrorist activities. The minimal penalties for wildlife crime in Hong Kong do not act as a deterrent.

Countries around the world are taking action to end the global ivory trade, destroying stockpiles of seized and confiscated ivory, and closing their domestic ivory markets.

Proposals for compensation of ivory traders could set a dangerous precedent and risks fuelling the poaching of elephants. This proposal has the potential to motivate traders to increase their ivory stocks in the short term, before the ban becomes effective, to increase future compensation payments. This will send a message to poachers that there is a finite period within which to supply ivory to Hong Kong traders, fuelling poaching.

For a number of reasons, compensation measures are entirely unnecessary. The 5 year phase-in period proposed in legislation, plus many past years of being advised that a ban may come into force, means that traders have had and will have ample time to deal with stocks of ivory. Most ivory traders do not rely on ivory for their income and those who have stored ivory are currently able to sell it, making compensation an unjustifiable demand.

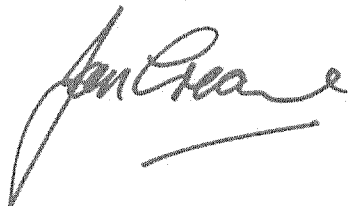
No other countries who have taken the steps to ban ivory trade have provided compensation to traders, including China where the ban comes into force at the end of the year.

Hong Kong lawmakers can play their part in ending the elephant poaching crisis and restoring the health of economies and communities in Africa that have been devastated by poaching.

Please support the government's proposal to end the ivory trade in Hong Kong and urge that the ban be introduced as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Creamer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jan Creamer
President