

African Elephant

Loxodonta africana

CoP13 Prop. 7 (Namibia) Amendment of the annotation regarding the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) population of Namibia to include:

- an annual export quota of 2,000 kg of raw ivory accumulated from natural and management-related mortalities;
- trade in worked ivory products for commercial purposes; and
- trade in elephant leather and hair goods for commercial purposes

CoP13 Prop. 8 (South Africa) Amendment of the annotation regarding the African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) population of South Africa to allow trade in leather goods for commercial purposes

SSN VIEW: OPPOSE ADOPTION OF BOTH PROPOSALS

BACKGROUND

Following a 50% reduction in African elephant populations between 1979 and 1989—mainly as a result of poaching for the ivory trade—the Parties to CITES CoP7 (1989) listed the African elephant on Appendix I. Since then, there have been proposals to transfer certain African elephant populations to Appendix II or to trade ivory internationally at every CoP.

In 1992 (CoP8), a joint proposal from Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe to transfer their elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II was withdrawn after some discussion. Zambia, originally included in the common proposal, had already withdrawn. A similar South African proposal was also withdrawn.

In 1994 (CoP9), proposals by Sudan and South Africa to transfer their elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II were withdrawn.

In 1997 (CoP10), the Parties agreed to transfer to Appendix II the elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, and to a subsequent auction of raw ivory to buyers from Japan. The adoption of these proposals was supported by a commitment to establish a monitoring system capable of detecting any negative impacts of the Appendix II listings and trade.

In 2000 (CoP11), the elephant population of South Africa was transferred to Appendix II, but no further ivory trade was agreed. Further proposals for ivory trade from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe were withdrawn.

In 2002 (CoP12), a conditional agreement was made to allow Namibia, Botswana and South Africa to export a total of 60 metric tons of raw ivory, subject to certain conditions being fulfilled to the satisfaction of the Standing Committee. These conditions have yet to be fulfilled. A proposal for an annual quota for export of raw ivory from Namibia was withdrawn and a proposal for a one-off sale of raw ivory from Zambia was rejected.

POACHING AND ILLEGAL TRADE CONTINUE TO THREATEN ELEPHANTS

The poaching of elephants for their ivory and the worldwide illegal trade in ivory remain serious threats to elephants. At CoP12, SSN estimated that a minimum of 1,059 African elephants were reported to have been poached for their ivory between January 2000 and June 2002, and that a minimum of 14,648 worked ivory pieces, 2,563 ivory tusks and 6.2 metric tons of raw ivory were reported to have been seized between January 2000 and June 2002.

Preliminary data indicate that, since CoP12, a minimum of 7.4 metric tons (more than 16,000 pounds) of ivory has been seized around the world, along with at least 1,187 worked items and 237 tusks of unknown weight. These seizures include:

- Ninety-two ivory items from Cameroun intercepted by Chinese customs in Zhejiang Province in January 2003. The ivory was buried among other goods in two containers.
- Sixty-five tusks, totaling 1000 kg of ivory, seized in Thailand in July 2003. The ivory, along with one rhino horn, arrived on an Ethiopian Airlines flight.
- Almost two metric tons of ivory seized in Hong Kong in October 2003. The ivory, which originated in Tanzania, was en route to mainland China.
- Six hundred and ninety-one ivory pieces seized in Zambia in July 2004. They were being transported to South Africa.
- Almost three metric tons of ivory seized by Spanish police in Madrid in July 2004.

Since CoP12, a minimum of 1,202 elephants have reportedly been poached in Africa and Asia. Range States that have lost elephants to poachers include Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, India, Vietnam and Indonesia. In the Democratic Republic of Congo's Garamba National Park alone, an estimated 1,000 elephants poached for their ivory between 2003 and 2004.

The ETIS report presented at CoP12 contained a graph showing the historical trend in the volume of ivory seized globally. The trend falls steeply after 1990 (when the Appendix I listing came into effect), stabilizes between 1994 and 1997, the year in which the first conditional ivory sale was agreed, and then rises sharply. The report also stated that 150 countries had some degree of involvement in the trade in illegal ivory.

Information presented to CoP12 by the Environmental Investigation Agency revealed that, prior to the seizure in Singapore of six metric tons of ivory destined for Japan, there had been 18 suspicious shipments involving the same smuggling syndicate. Much of this ivory was destined for Japan.

The global problem of unregulated internal ivory markets, now belatedly being addressed by CITES, poses a serious threat to all elephant populations. Decision 12.39 identified ten Parties with active and illegal internal markets. Although the issue of internal ivory controls in these Parties is starting to be addressed, there remain many more Parties whose internal controls are not being assessed. A 2003 report by Esmond Martin and Daniel Styles entitled *The Ivory Markets of East Asia* noted that 54,000 ivory items were seen in 413 retail outlets in eleven cities. Ivory smuggled into China is processed and then exported to Hong Kong or Macau, for onward shipment to Europe, Japan, North America, Singapore and Thailand. Recent research also suggests that mainland China is now emerging as a significant consumer of ivory.

A survey of antiques traders and internet traders in Britain, carried out in 2004 by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, revealed a thriving illegal ivory market that owes its existence to ignorance and lack of expertise on the part of traders, forged documents, new ivory designed to look antique and traders willing to write out false certificates claiming that the ivory was 100 years old. The Humane Society of the United States found similar conditions in the United States. These conditions are exacerbated by the availability of ivory through internet auction sites, against which monitoring and enforcement are difficult.

In addition, proposals to trade in elephant products should be opposed for the following reasons:

- Ivory items from legal and illegal sources cannot be distinguished from one another.
- Potential importing countries are unlikely to have sufficient trade controls in place to prevent illegal ivory from entering their domestic markets.
- Enforcement controls in most range States are inadequate to prevent poaching and illegal trade; enforcement needs already exceed capacity in most range States and the increased demands on enforcement resources resulting from further trade in ivory and other elephant products will simply be untenable.
- Customs authorities lack the resources to verify the origin of all imported ivory; consequently, worked ivory from countries with Appendix I populations or from countries not permitted to export worked ivory, may enter the market.
- Further legalized ivory trade, particularly in worked ivory items, is likely to confuse consumers even more and to encourage them to believe that all international ivory trade is now legal. The sale of worked ivory products through the internet will create insurmountable enforcement difficulties and facilitate illegal trade in poached ivory.
- Further agreements to permit international trade in elephant products from certain countries will complicate even more the already confusing situation with regard to enforcement.

It is clear that elephant poaching and illegal trade in ivory remain serious threats to elephants. In addition, uncontrolled and unregulated internal ivory markets in a large number of countries provide an outlet for large quantities of illegal ivory.

As long as consumers believe that it is acceptable to buy ivory and other elephant products, and as long as poachers and traders can be confident of escaping the law, this situation is likely to prevail. It can only be fuelled by legalizing the trade in ivory or other elephant products.

CoP13 PROPOSAL 7 (NAMIBIA)

No trade in ivory, whether from stockpiles or as worked ivory products, should be allowed while illegal ivory trade and poaching for tusks remain serious threats and while the internal ivory trade in key consumer markets remain uncontrolled.

Annual Export Quota

SSN opposes the proposal for an annual quota of raw ivory, which is tantamount to a permanent and unmonitored re-opening of trade in elephant products from Namibia.

Namibia requested, but was denied, an annual ivory export quota at CoP12; no further ivory exports should be considered until the Standing Committee has determined whether the ivory export conditionally approved at CoP12 can occur and until the effects on elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade are known.

It is of particular concern that the volume of ivory proposed for annual export from Namibia apparently exceeds the annual volume normally accumulated by Namibia.

It is also problematic that the proposed annual ivory export quotas would appear not to be subject to the same conditions as the one-off export of ivory, particularly the requirement that trade be halted if detrimental to elephant populations.

The Secretariat notes in its Provisional Assessment of this proposal that, in recent years, ivory seizure levels in Namibia have stabilized at a much lower level than in the past and that ivory exports should not compromise elephant management in Namibia. However, the stabilization of seizures is not necessarily an indication of a stabilization or reduction of illegal trade. Ivory seizures have risen dramatically elsewhere and the export of ivory from Namibia may compromise elephant management in other range States. The July 2004 seizure of four elephant tusks in Namibia indicates that illegal trade is ongoing in that country.

Worked Ivory Products

SSN opposes trade in worked ivory products such as tourist souvenirs or other products; this trade is inadequately regulated in many range States and large quantities of carved ivory products are traded illegally around the world. The existence of large volumes of legal worked ivory products in international markets will render effective enforcement impossible and facilitate the laundering of illegal products.

Trade in Elephant Leather and Hair

Allowing international trade in worked ivory or elephant leather and hair goods would send a confusing message to consumers, who would be able to buy worked ivory from one country but not from others, or buy one type of elephant product but not another; such confusion could be exploited by illegal traders and poachers.

Elephant hair products may not be readily distinguished by non-experts from hair products of other species (such as zebra). In addition, a June 2003 seizure in Madrid of 110 kg of elephant hair, reported to have been taken from more than 1,000 African elephants, along with 180 pieces of jewellery made from elephant hair, indicates that there is a sizeable illegal trade in non-ivory products from elephants.

CoP13 PROPOSAL 8 (SOUTH AFRICA)

When the population of South Africa was transferred to Appendix II at CoP11, the trade in leather goods for commercial purposes was included in the annotation to the listing; however, at CoP12, while South Africa's proposal sought continued trade in leather goods, the proposal put to the vote included only trade in leather goods for non-commercial purposes; this proposal seeks to rectify this apparently inadvertent mistake.

However, revenue from the commercial trade in leather goods may be sufficient to encourage culling of elephants for their skins and this would encourage the stockpiling of ivory.

The trade in leather goods also sends a mixed message to consumers who would be able to buy one type of elephant product but not ivory.