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Summary Position Statement on Elephant Proposals

Recommendations to Parties for CITES CoP17

► SUPPORT and ADOPT the following proposals

An integrated package of five proposals to protect elephants under international law has been submitted to CITES CoP17 by members of the **African Elephant Coalition (AEC)** along with other co-proponent countries. Together the proposals would ban international ivory trade, close domestic ivory markets, end discussions on future ivory trade, improve management of ivory stockpiles and endorse their destruction, and restrict trade in live elephants. The AEC includes 29 African countries, 26 of them African elephant range States, comprising the overwhelming majority (70%) of the 37 countries in which African elephants are found.

1. CoP17 Prop. 16

Listing all elephants in CITES Appendix I

Proponents: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Uganda

This proposal will afford all African elephants the highest level of protection by transferring the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe from CITES Appendix II to Appendix I, unifying all range States in a universal Appendix I listing that bans international commercial ivory trade and ends the current split-listing. National listings are political, not biological. **The African elephant as a species** meets the Appendix I listing criteria, having suffered **a 61% decline over 33 years from 1980 to 2013**. As a migratory species with many cross-border populations, a unified approach to their protection under CITES is called for. Listing all African elephants in Appendix I is the best way to protect the species **as a whole**, and to prevent the emerging escalation of poaching in the four Appendix II countries. An Appendix I listing will simplify and improve enforcement, show that CITES is united in the fight against extinction of African elephants and, above all, send a clear message to the world that buying and selling ivory is illegal under international law, dangerous for elephants and unacceptable.

¹ The 26 range States in the African Elephant Coalition include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo and Uganda. Burundi, Comoros and Mauritania are non-range State members.



2. CoP17 Doc. 57.2

Closure of domestic ivory markets

Proponents: Angola, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Niger and Senegal

This proposal from AEC countries together with Angola recommends the closure of all domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory. Maintaining domestic markets enables the laundering of poached ivory under the guise that it is antique, "pre-Convention" or otherwise legally acquired. Closing down these markets is an [essential action to complement an Appendix I listing](#). It would radically reduce opportunities for laundering poached ivory, reinforcing the message that buying and selling ivory is completely unacceptable.

3. CoP17 Doc. 57.3

Ivory stockpile destruction and management

Proponents: Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal

This proposal recommends ivory destruction wherever possible, and requests the CITES Secretariat to provide the best available technical guidance on stockpile inventories, audit, management and disposal, including DNA sampling to determine the origin of items in the stockpile. It builds on two papers submitted to the CITES Standing Committee in 2014 and 2016, which led to the Committee recognizing the destructions of government ivory stockpiles since 2011, and recommending the development of guidance on stockpile management.

4. CoP17 Doc. 57.4

Restricting trade in live elephants

Proponents: Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Kenya, Mali, Niger and Senegal

The proposal would end the export of African elephants taken from the wild outside their natural range, including to zoos and other captive facilities overseas. Such exports disrupt elephant populations, afford no direct benefit to elephant conservation in range States (as recognized by the IUCN-SSC African Elephant Specialist Group), and provoke strong objections both within and outside Africa on ethical, humane and cultural grounds. [African elephants should remain in Africa](#).

5. CoP17 Doc. 84.2

Ending the Decision-Making Mechanism for a process of trade in ivory (DMM)

Proponents: Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger and Senegal

The proposal recommends that the CoP ends negotiations on the DMM. Discussing a process to legalize ivory trade sends precisely the wrong message – that a legal and sustainable ivory trade is possible, and could reopen in the not-too-distant future – undermining global efforts to reduce demand for ivory and close domestic markets. The DMM poses unacceptable risks for elephants. [After nine years of negotiations that have gone nowhere, it's time to put an end to them](#).



▶ **REJECT the following proposals**

1. CoP17 Prop. 14 and CoP17 Prop. 15

Proposals to delete the annotation to the Appendix II listing

Proponents: Namibia (Prop. 14 and 15) and Zimbabwe (Prop. 15)

Namibia and Zimbabwe propose to delete the annotation to the Appendix II listing of their elephant populations to allow an “unqualified” trade in ivory, contending that “a controlled marketing system would allow the government to raise money to combat illicit poaching and for conservation programs”. The proposal flies in the face of history, as bitter experience shows that **the international ivory trade cannot be controlled**. Repeated attempts to control a legal, “sustainable” trade have been disastrous, both before the Appendix I listing in 1989 when all African elephants were in Appendix II, and most recently in the period after the 2008 ivory stockpile sales from Southern Africa to China and Japan. New research published in June and August 2016 directly links the 2008 sales to the recent escalation in poaching. Re-opening the ivory trade risks the extinction of elephants in Africa and Asia. Southern Africa is no longer immune from the slaughter; the pressure exerted by criminal syndicates is intensifying in areas formerly regarded as safe, with increased poaching reported in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, and in neighbouring trans-frontier areas. The Great Elephant Census has found that savannah elephant populations are declining at 8% a year. **We must learn the lessons of history and end the ivory trade once and for all.**

2. CoP17 Doc. 84.3

Proposal to establish a Decision-Making Mechanism (DMM) for a process of international trade in ivory

Proponents: Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe

The proposal would allow the CITES Standing Committee to permit commercial exports of ivory from Appendix II range States to any importing “partner” States. It seeks a reversion to an unlimited, regular global trade in ivory with minimal supervision and no safeguards. **The proposal carries a dangerous and unacceptable risk** of stimulating the illegal ivory trade, endangering all African and Asian elephants.



▶ SUPPORT the following proposals with amendments

1. CoP17 Doc. 27

Proposal on Actions to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

Proponent: USA

This proposal includes a range of much needed recommendations to combat wildlife trafficking. A key recommendation urges CITES Parties to close domestic ivory markets, indicating a welcome convergence of views with the proposal by African countries, and should be supported. However, it retains a section on regulating domestic ivory markets for countries that have “not yet” closed them that opens up a loophole and risks the retention of regulated markets as an alternative; it would delay closure and should be deleted. The proposed language on closing domestic markets should also be aligned with the stronger proposal from the AEC and Angola (CoP17 Doc. 57.2), which would enable more urgent and decisive action to achieve the same objective as the US - closure of domestic ivory markets worldwide.

2. CoP17 Doc.40

International Trade in Live Appendix-II Animals to Appropriate and Acceptable Destinations

Proponent: USA

This proposal recommends amending Resolution Conf. 11.20 on Definition of the term ‘appropriate and acceptable destinations’ to ensure the trade “*would support in situ conservation*” and to prevent rhino horn and elephant ivory from the animals and their offspring from entering commercial trade or being sport hunted. This should be amended to align it with the AEC proposal (CoP17 Doc. 57.4), limiting trade to wild animals destined for established *in situ* conservation programmes, and the proposed recipient should be required to provide an environment consistent with the animal’s biological, ecological, behavioural, and health needs.