

3

Closure of Domestic Ivory Markets

Current Status: International commercial ivory trade is restricted through the Appendix I listing of Asian elephants and most African elephant populations and a moratorium on proposals for trade by Appendix II countries until 2017. However, **CITES allows domestic ivory markets to continue, stipulating measures for their regulation**. The existence of these markets legitimizes ivory as a desirable commodity and maintains or increases demand.

Background: Sales of ivory within legal domestic markets increase the risk to elephants by creating a significant opportunity for the laundering of illegal ivory into legal trade under the guise that it is antique, “pre-Convention” or otherwise legally acquired.

In several countries, domestic markets have been the main outlets for laundered illegally sourced ivory, e.g. in China, Hong Kong SAR, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Angola. In Thailand, a study found that the quantity of ivory available for purchase far exceeded the limited legal supply available from domesticated animals, meaning the vast majority of ivory being sold was illegal. In Africa, the problems created by domestic markets are illustrated by Angola, which until recently had one of the largest illegal markets on the continent. An estimated 1,600 elephants remain in Angola, but it is thought that its internal market was supplied from the forest elephants of Central African Republic or Democratic Republic of Congo. In April 2016, Angola took a welcome first step by announcing a ban on the sale of ivory and ivory artefacts and became one of the 10 African co-proponents of Doc. 57.2 proposing to close domestic ivory markets.

The USA and France have enacted a near-total ban on commercial ivory trade, while China, Hong Kong and the EU are moving towards shutting down or limiting their domestic markets in ivory. **However, new ivory markets are emerging** elsewhere, most recently in Cambodia. There is also a continuing issue with the regulation of trade in “pre-Convention” ivory (i.e. ivory obtained before CITES rules applied). This “old ivory” can serve as a loophole enabling trade in illegal ivory from poached elephants.

In a historic vote, on 10 September 2016, the IUCN World Conservation Congress passed Motion 007 with a 91% majority, urging countries to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw or worked elephant ivory.

¹ Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16)



1. CoP17 Doc. 57.2

Closure of domestic ivory markets for elephant ivory

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

► Recommendation: SUPPORT

This proposal by countries in the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) together with Angola, calls for a CoP Resolution on Closure of Domestic Markets for Elephant Ivory that *"RECOMMENDS that all Parties and non-Parties, particularly those in whose jurisdiction there is a legal domestic market for ivory, or any domestic commerce in ivory, adopt all necessary legislative, regulatory and enforcement measures as a matter of urgency to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw or worked ivory"*. It also appeals for support to implement the recommendation, and for full and timely implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan to address the prevailing elephant crisis.

The proposed Resolution is essential to complement an Appendix I listing. It would assist countries already taking action to heavily restrict their internal domestic markets and provide an incentive for other countries to shut down their domestic outlets for ivory. Importantly, it would **drastically reduce opportunities for laundering poached ivory**, reinforcing the message that buying and selling ivory is completely unacceptable.

2. CoP17 Doc. 27

Actions to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

Proponent: USA

► Recommendation: SUPPORT with amendment

This proposal covers three distinct areas - closing domestic ivory trade, reviewing domestic markets for CITES species in general and addressing trade in bio-engineered CITES products. Among a range of measures, an addition is proposed to existing Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in Elephant Specimens that *"URGES all Parties to take all necessary legislative, regulatory and enforcement efforts to close their domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory"*. This is a welcome convergence of views with the proposal by African countries. However, the US proposal also **retains a substantial section in the Resolution on regulating domestic ivory markets for countries that have "not yet" closed them**. This concession on regulated markets would allow the prospect for some countries to delay moves towards closure, risks signalling that regulated markets could be retained as an alternative, and should be deleted. The proposed language on closure of domestic ivory markets is also weaker than the language proposed by African countries, and should be aligned with the African text.