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Restricting the Trade in Live Elephants

Current Status: Exports of live wild-caught elephants from African range States to captive facilities elsewhere in the world, including to the US, Europe and China, continue to take place despite strong opposition from respected elephant researchers, other range states, NGOs and the public.

Background: According to CITES trade data, between 2005 and 2014, 70 live wild-caught African elephants were exported from African range States to zoos and circuses throughout the world. In 2015, 24 juvenile elephants captured from their family herds in Zimbabwe were exported to a Chinese safari park and in 2016 a further 18 were exported from Swaziland to American zoos.

The harmful effects of capturing highly social and intelligent elephants from their family groups are well-documented: social groups are disrupted and during capture, there have been examples of deaths and wounding of adults and juveniles; in captivity, there is the trauma of separation of calves from their mothers and family members from each other, as well as negative impacts of the conditions in which they are kept on physical and mental health. Survival and reproduction rates of elephants are significantly lower in captivity than in the wild and captive populations are not self-sustaining. The capture of wild elephants from their herds for export is inherently cruel and detrimental to the individuals involved as well as the remaining family members.

The IUCN-SSC African Elephant Specialist Group has stated that the removal of African elephants from the wild for any captive use has no direct benefit for their *in situ* conservation (i.e. conservation within their natural habitat¹). The South African government's National Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants clearly prohibit the capture of live elephants, and state that "*unnecessary disruption of these groups by human intervention should be minimized.*"²

Elephants are important cultural symbols and ecological engineers. There are strong objections within and outside Africa to their capture and export on conservation, ethical, and cultural grounds.

¹ https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/who_we_are/ssc_specialist_groups_and_red_list_authorities_directory/mammals/african_elephant/statements/captive_use/

² https://www.environment.gov.za/sites/default/files/gazetted_notices/nemba_elephantsinsa_g30833gon251.pdf



1. CoP17 Doc. 57.4

Proposed revision of Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in elephant specimens

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

▶ Recommendation: SUPPORT

This proposal by countries in the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) calls on Parties to limit the export of wild African elephants to destinations in their natural habitat in the wild except in emergency situations. It would achieve this by revising existing CITES Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev. CoP16) on Trade in Elephant Specimens with a recommendation that **the only appropriate and acceptable recipients of live elephants taken from the wild are *in situ* conservation programmes or secure areas in the wild within the species' natural range**. This action would help with strengthening national legislation for the prevention of the detrimental and inhumane treatment that is inevitable in the live elephant trade, and is consistent with the other four proposals in the package submitted to CoP17 by the AEC in ending the treatment of elephants as commodities.

2. CoP17 Doc.40

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

Proponent: USA

▶ Recommendation: SUPPORT with amendment

This proposal by the USA also aims to limit the trade in live elephants as well as rhinos. Motivated by the need to ensure the trade does not undermine global efforts to combat trafficking of rhino horn and elephant ivory and reduce demand, the proposal recommends an amendment to 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.

We recommend that Parties support the proposal with an amendment to align it with the AEC proposal. This would clarify the definition of 'appropriate and acceptable destinations' so that animals taken from the wild under this condition could only be exported to established *in situ* conservation programmes or other well protected areas in natural ecosystems.