



NGOs demand a ban on EU ivory trade

Why closure of ivory markets in Europe is needed.

Joint press release by Born Free Foundation, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Eurogroup for Animals, Environmental Investigation Agency, Humane Society International/Europe, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Pro Wildlife, Robin des Bois, Wildlife Conservation Society

Brussels, 13th December 2017 – On Friday 8th December, the final day of the public consultation on the EU ivory trade, the European Commission hosted a meeting with stakeholders to hear their views on the action needed for the EU to effectively combat ivory trafficking. Elephants are facing their worst crisis in decades due to poaching for their ivory. Populations are thought to be falling by about 8 percent annually and at least 20,000 African elephants continue to be killed each year.

During the stakeholder meeting, NGOs explained to the Commission the EU's contribution to the global ivory trade as a transit hub, consumer market and major exporter and the damage that the trade causes to communities:

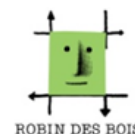
- EU exports of ivory stimulate demand worldwide, particularly in the main markets for illegal ivory in Asia;
- The legalised domestic market inside the EU legitimises ivory as a desirable product to trade and provides a cover for laundering illegal ivory;
- The global ivory trade involves transnational organised crime networks, costs the lives of rangers dedicated to protecting wildlife, and is damaging communities and the economies of developing countries (for example, through lost tourism revenue).

Therefore, conservation and animal protection NGOs jointly called on the EU to comprehensively and permanently ban external and domestic trade in raw and worked ivory, allowing only minimum and tightly worded exemptions for museums, musical instruments and antique items containing very minor amounts of ivory both in weight and percentage.

The ivory trade is a global problem, and maintaining any ivory markets encourages demand for poached ivory as well as providing a cover for it to be laundered. The undersigned organisations do not challenge existing private ownership or inheritance of legally obtained ivory or exchanges between museums.

There is considerable support for a closure of the EU ivory market, from the European public with over 90 percent of Europeans not interested in buying ivory products¹, Members of the European

¹ <http://www.ifaw.org/european-union/resource-centre/eu-ivory-trade-kills-elephants>



Parliament², the majority of African elephant range states³⁴, 165 scientists from 33 countries worldwide, including from within 13 EU countries⁵, more than 50 conservation organisations from all over the world⁶, faith leaders⁷, a legislator from Hong Kong⁸, online traders such as eBay⁹ and an auction house based in Australia which actually closed most of its trade in ivory.¹⁰

The undersigned NGOs, who also submitted a [joint briefing](#) to the European Commission on the EU ivory trade, will continue to engage with the Commission and other EU institutions to push for the introduction of the tightest possible controls on EU ivory trade as a matter of urgency. A proposal from the European Commission is expected by mid-2018.

This release is endorsed by the following organisations: Born Free Foundation, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Eurogroup for Animals, Environmental Investigation Agency, Humane Society International/Europe, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Pro Wildlife, Robin des Bois, Wildlife Conservation Society.

Notes to the editors

The undersigned NGOs welcome the fact that a number of traders present at the meeting seemed to accept that further action would be taken to curb the ivory trade. Regrettably they seemed still unwilling to accept that all ivory markets are connected, or that maintaining open ivory markets encourages demand for poached ivory as well as providing a cover for it to be laundered. The debate revealed concerns about the lack of knowledge and understanding of the EU's very complex (and almost impossible to enforce) rules on the ivory trade even among traders.

Implementing this ban would:

- stop feeding Asian domestic ivory markets, of which the largest are now being closed down by the Beijing and Hong Kong authorities, and help prevent illegal ivory from being laundered through the EU;
- support the ongoing enforcement and demand reduction efforts in Asian markets;
- show solidarity with other countries, which have taken action themselves and called for others to do so, including most African elephant range states, China, the United States and soon the UK;
- ensure EU compliance with various resolutions passed, including by the European Parliament, at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, at the 2016 CITES conference, and the United Nations General Assembly (Sept 2017), urging the closure of domestic markets which contribute to poaching and illegal trade;
- not cause any serious economic damage (recent surveys in the UK have shown that only a very small percentage of antique auction lots actually contain ivory), and;
- not require the destruction of privately and legally owned ivory artefacts.

² https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Letter-EU-ministers_ivory-markets.docx.pdf

³ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/African-Elephant-Coalition-calls-for-EU-ivory-ban-01122017.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/EPI-letter-EU-ivory-ban-28112017.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Scientists-letter-EU-ivory-ban-Dec2017.pdf>

⁶ https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Letter-EU-ministers_ivory-markets.docx.pdf

⁷ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Faith-leaders-letter-EU-ivory-consultation-07122017.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Hong-Kong-Legislative-Councillor-letter-EU-ivory-ban-08122017.pdf>

⁹ https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/eBay_letter_calling_for_EU_ivory_ban.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.prowildlife.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Leonard-Joel-EU-ivory-ban-Dec2017.pdf>