

The African Elephant Coalition

Proposals to relax the African elephant's protected status and to promote one-off sales of stockpiled ivory spell doom to the elephants within our lifetimes. Twenty-four African countries have come together to harness information to shape policy to ensure the elephants' future.

Background

1. In 1979 there were an estimated 1.3 million African elephants. Today, only 470,000 remain; some authorities estimate the number to be considerably lower.
2. The loss of a million elephants has been due primarily to killing for ivory. Natural habitat loss is a second important factor: human population has tripled in elephant range states since 1970.
3. Major public awareness campaigns have been launched worldwide to save the elephant and halt the illegal trade in ivory.
4. In October 1989, at the seventh meeting of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Convention of the Parties (CoP7), governments banned international trade in ivory with effect from January 1990
5. The links between the ivory trade and the illegal killing of elephants are clear (see KEF Fact Sheet 02, Elephant Poaching and the Ivory Trade). Unless action is taken based on good information and sound policy, African elephants will be gone from most of their former range within our lifetimes.

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6. Already in 1989, some Parties to the convention (France, UK, USA) had begun to impose their own ivory import bans. At each CITES meeting national contact groups formed in support of various propositions to control trade and protect elephant populations.
7. At CoP14 in 2007, a growing coalition of West, Central and East Africa states joined forces to support a Kenya-Mali proposal for a 20-year moratorium on the ivory trade. A compromise was reached with pro-trade Parties for a 9-year moratorium.
8. In February 2008, nineteen national representatives met in Mali to plan for implementation of CoP14 elephant Decisions. The Parties present agreed the 'Bamako Declaration' to formalise the 'African Elephant Coalition', and declaring that:

The coalition will strive to have a viable and healthy elephant population free of threats from International ivory trade. Parties to the coalition will also develop an elephant action plan that will encompass national and regional elephant strategies that promote non consumptive use of elephants through development of ecotourism for the benefit of local communities.

9. A follow-up meeting in June in Mombasa, Kenya, formally inaugurated the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) in order to promote and sustain a united front for the long-term conservation of Africa's elephants and their habitats.
10. The AEC today includes 24 of the 37 African elephant Range States. They are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Liberia, Southern Sudan, and Rwanda. Mauritania is a member as a non-range state.
11. The six nominated AEC Bureau countries (underlined in para. 8) met in Rwanda in June 2009 to reaffirm the AEC commitment to stand firm and speak with one voice to protect one of the largest land mammals on Earth.
12. The composition of the AEC includes high-level government officials from national wildlife management authorities and technical and scientific representatives from civil society, with small secretariats in each member state. The Coalition is therefore a powerful lobbying voice at CITES Conference of the Parties (CoP) meetings.

13. The Coalition is chaired at ministerial level. The current co-chairman are H.E. Aghatam AG Alhassane, Minister for the Environment, Mali, and Dr. Noah Wekesa, Minister for Forestry and Wildlife, Kenya.
14. The Coalition has designated three regional focal points, currently Côte d'Ivoire for Western Africa, the Central African Republic for Central Africa and Rwanda for Eastern Africa.
15. The next meeting of the Coalition in Brussels, January, 2010, will approve its organisational structure.

Action Plan

16. Specific activities of the Coalition include:
 - (a) Follow-up on the implementation of CITES CoP14 Decisions on elephant conservation and ivory trade and particularly those Decisions directed to the Parties;
 - (b) Implementation of Decision 14.75, *Directed to African elephant range States*, (Appendix 1) on resource mobilization, capacity building, development and implementation of Action Plans;
 - (c) Monitoring of both legal and illegal trade in ivory;
 - (d) Developing a common stand for the CITES CoPs based on new developments in ivory trade and elephant conservation and management;
 - (e) Advising the Standing Committee members representing the sub-regions represented in the Coalition on matters relating to the African elephant
17. The Coalition is spearheading an information and awareness campaign to help policy makers take the correct decisions on the ivory trade at the next CITES CoP in March in Doha.

For more information, please contact the Kenya Elephant Forum or one of the AEC national focal points listed below.

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