

Cotonou Declaration
6th Meeting of the African Elephant Coalition
Cotonou, Benin
4 November 2015

We, the members of the African Elephant Coalition representing 22 countries from Western Africa, Central Africa and Eastern Africa, and three observer countries, at the 6th Meeting of the African Elephant Coalition held in Cotonou, Benin, 2-4 November 2015¹,

Deeply concerned about the crisis facing African elephants as a result of poaching and the trade in ivory, and **alarmed** at the decline in elephant populations throughout Africa and loss of human lives,

Recognizing that increasing demand for ivory is driving poaching,

Recalling that African elephant populations began to recover after they were listed on CITES Appendix I in 1989, banning international trade in ivory,

Convinced that split-listing of African elephant populations on CITES Appendices I and II since 1997 to allow limited trade in ivory has had a detrimental impact on African elephant populations across their range,

Further convinced that concerted action through CITES to ban international and domestic trade in ivory is essential for the long-term survival of the African elephant,

Recalling the preamble of CITES which recognizes “that wild fauna and flora in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come”,

Acknowledging the threats presented by human elephant conflict and the expansion of other land use, such as for agriculture, causing habitat loss and the fragmentation of African elephant populations,

Recognizing the need to strengthen human and technical resources of the institutions managing African elephant populations to enable them to respond effectively to the current crisis,

Considering that the African Elephant Action Plan, agreed to by all range States at the 15th Conference of the Parties to CITES at Doha in 2010, can only be implemented effectively in the absence of trade in ivory,

Welcoming the commitment by China and the United States to “enact nearly complete bans on ivory import and export, including significant and timely restrictions on the import of ivory as hunting trophies, and to take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade of ivory”²,

Further welcoming the Elephant Protection Initiative which is based on similar beliefs as the African Elephant Coalition, including supporting implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan,

¹ Members present : Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Togo. Observer countries present : Burundi, Gabon and Uganda.

² From statement issued by the White House on 25 September 2015, accessed at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/25/fact-sheet-president-xi-jinpings-state-visit-united-states>

Convinced of the need for urgent action to protect African elephants from over-exploitation as a result of poaching and international and domestic trade in ivory,

Do hereby agree to:

1. **Reaffirm** our commitment to support each other in elephant conservation and to ensure the long term survival of the African elephant across its range;
2. **Propose** and **support** the listing of all African elephant populations on CITES Appendix I and **request** support for such a proposal from other Parties to CITES and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations;
3. **Enact, implement** and **enforce** legislation prohibiting domestic ivory trade and **support** all proposals and actions at international and national levels to close domestic ivory markets worldwide;
4. **Ensure** and, where necessary, **enhance** implementation of national elephant action plans and national ivory action plans for the conservation and management of African elephants and combating trade in ivory, including through enacting legislation that criminalizes poaching and illegal trade in ivory and includes deterrent penalties;
5. **Cooperate** in developing and promoting best practices for the management and disposal of ivory stockpiles.
6. **Cooperate** to mobilise resources to ensure implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan, including approaching the African Elephant Fund for further support as well as other relevant financial institutions, governments, inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.
7. **Urge** observer countries participating in this meeting, and which have expressed interest in the ideals of the African Elephant Coalition, to pursue the processes necessary at national level to enable them to join the Coalition.