



To the Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius

Brussels, 29 October 2020

MEPs (for Wildlife) joint letter on Restricting ivory trade in the European Union

Dear Commissioner,

Elephants are declining significantly throughout Africa and Asia. Every year, up to 20 000 African elephants are killed illegally for their ivory and it is vital that the EU does its part to help save this iconic animal from becoming extinct in many parts of its range.

There is strong evidence that legal markets serve as a cover for trade in illegal ivory, including within the EU. Allowing the sale of ivory reinforces its social acceptability and makes it a desirable product to own or even invest in, further fuelling the illegal market and stimulating transnational wildlife crime. Ivory trafficking exacerbates conflict, corruption, and poverty, and thereby weakens local and national security and governance.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), for instance, concluded that “the trade in illicit ivory is only lucrative because there is a parallel licit supply, and ivory can be sold and used openly. Ivory would lose much of its marketability if buying it were unequivocally an illegal act, or if ownership of these status goods had to be concealed”.

To help stop elephant poaching and ivory trafficking, the majority of African elephant range states have called on consumer countries to close all legal domestic markets for ivory. The international community has recognised and supported this, including through Resolutions at the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress and the last meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Conference of the Parties (CoP), calling on governments to close domestic ivory markets.

We commend the European Commission for developing an EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking in 2016. We strongly hope it will continue after 2020 and note the commitment in the Biodiversity Strategy to "further tightening of the rules on EU ivory trade". Following the

European Parliament's strong position on this issue and clear calls by the majority of African elephant range states for a comprehensive ban on ivory trade, public opinion and civil society efforts, your services presented a proposal for a Revision of EU rules on ivory trade.

After more than three years of work we are seriously concerned that the measures proposed in particular for the trade within the EU, are not strong enough and may create enforcement and laundering of illegal pieces issues. Furthermore, the current and future regimes are a combination of Regulation and Guidance, which could complicate even more its implementation and transposition at the national level.

Closing the EU's domestic ivory market will also send important signals to other consumer countries and give the EU added credibility when it asks other countries to close their domestic markets.

Thank you for the high level of attention and ambition you have given to tackling wildlife trafficking and we look forward to jointly steering the EU on this critical issue.

We would be pleased to discuss this issue with you in the next following weeks and we will really appreciate if you could intervene and participate to our webinar on the 17th of November (10.00-11.30) to explain how the future regime restricting ivory trade in the EU could achieve the objectives in the Green Deal and fulfill the requirements by EU citizens and African countries.

Yours sincerely,

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Guy Verhofstadt
Urmas Paet
Olivier Chastel
Klemen Grošelj
Maria Walsh
Giuseppe Ferrandino
Emil Radev
Dino Giarrusso
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Jan-Christoph Oetjen
Michal Šimečka
Martin Buschmann
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