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African Nations Call On the World to Help Them Save African Elephants

The African Elephant Coalition (AEC), comprising 29 African countries, are calling on the world to join them in saving elephants. The Montreux Manifesto, agreed at a meeting of the Coalition in Montreux, Switzerland from 24 to 26 June, launches a social media campaign – #WorthMoreAlive, #EndIvoryTrade, #Vote4Elephants” – to gain support for their five-part package to put an end to the ivory trade and afford elephants the highest protection under international law.

The AEC’s package, consisting of five proposals to the 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP17) of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in September-October in Johannesburg, South Africa, is designed to reverse the poaching crisis facing elephants. Taken together, the proposals would ban the international trade in ivory by listing all elephants in CITES Appendix I, close domestic ivory markets around the world, encourage better management of ivory stockpiles and where possible their destruction, end further debate in CITES on a mechanism to legalize ivory trade, and limit exports of live African elephants to conservation projects in their natural habitat.

“The Montreux Manifesto shows that our message is clear.”, says Bourama Niagaté from Mali, a member of the Council of the Elders for the Coalition, “we need to all pull together for the sake of Africa’s elephants.”

The Coalition expressed its deep concern about the crisis facing elephants and its conviction that a ban on international and domestic trade in ivory is the best way to protect elephants.

“CITES saved African elephants from certain extinction 27 years ago by listing them on Appendix I,” says Vera Weber, president of the Swiss-based Fondation Franz Weber, a partner organization of the AEC, which facilitated the meeting. “Since then the protection of elephants

has been weakened, and poaching has escalated. The AEC has charted a path to relist elephants on Appendix I and ban the ivory trade once and for all.”

The Manifesto appeals to governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations for their support, and calls on citizens around the world to ask their respective governments and CITES representatives to support the five proposals and to help the Coalition in its mission to list all elephants in Appendix I.

NOTES

The five proposals submitted by the AEC to CITES are:

1. [Listing all elephants in CITES Appendix I](#)

The proposal seeks to unify all African elephant populations and their range States in one Appendix I listing, ending split-listing through the transfer from Appendix II of the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The African elephant as a species is not constrained within State borders, nor indeed are national populations. Many are shared with more than one country, arguing for a unified approach to their regulation under CITES. This action seeks to gain the maximum protection for elephants by simplifying and improving enforcement and sending a clear message to the world that ivory cannot be legally traded under international law.

2. [Closure of domestic ivory markets](#)

This proposal calls for closure of all domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory. Closing all internal markets in range, transit and end-user consumer States would drastically reduce opportunities for the laundering of poached ivory, under the guise that it is antique, “pre-Convention” or otherwise legally acquired. It would also reinforce the message that all ivory sales should be stopped, as they are dangerous for elephants.

3. [Ivory stockpile destruction and management](#)

This proposal builds on two earlier papers submitted to the CITES Standing Committee in 2014 and 2016, which led to recognition by the Committee of the destructions of ivory stockpiles by governments since 2011, and a recommendation to develop guidance on stockpile management. It endorses ivory destruction, encourages the highest possible standards of stockpile management, and requests the CITES Secretariat to provide the best available technical guidance on stockpile inventories, audit, management and disposal, including DNA sampling to determine the origin of items in the stockpile.

4. [The Decision-Making Mechanism for a process of trade in ivory \(DMM\)](#)

The proposal recommends that the CoP should end negotiations on the DMM. In view of the concerted global efforts to reduce demand for ivory, the existence of negotiations on a DMM process to legalize trade sends precisely the wrong message – that a legal and sustainable ivory trade is possible, and could reopen in the not-too-distant future. The DMM not only poses unacceptable risks for elephants, but has also generated valid objections among Parties, as shown by the fact that CITES has been unable to make any progress in negotiations after 9 years.

5. [Restricting trade in live elephants](#)

The proposal aims to end the export of African elephants outside their natural range, including export to zoos and other captive facilities overseas. Such exports provide no direct benefit to conservation of elephants in their range States (as noted by the IUCN-SSC African Elephant Specialist Group), and there are considerable objections within Africa on ethical and cultural grounds. African elephants, along with their ivory, should remain in Africa.

· The [African Elephant Coalition](#) was established in 2008 in Bamako, Mali. It comprises 29 member countries from Africa united by a common goal: “a viable and healthy elephant population free of threats

from international ivory trade.” The meeting in Montreux from 24-26 June will be the seventh meeting of the Coalition since it was founded.

- The 29 member countries of the African Elephant Coalition include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo and Uganda. Of the 29 countries represented in the Coalition, 25 of them are African elephant range States, comprising the majority (68%) of the 37 countries in which African elephants occur in the wild.

- [Fondation Franz Weber](#) (FFW), based in Switzerland, actively fights to preserve wildlife and nature in Africa and works worldwide to protect animals as individuals through the recognition of their rights and the abolition of inhumane practices.

- [The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#) was established in 1973, entered into force in 1975, and accords varying degrees of protection to more than 35,000 species of animals and plants. Currently 182 countries are Parties to the Convention. The 17th Conference of the Parties to CITES ([CoP17](#)) will be held in Johannesburg from 24 September to 5 October 2016. The Conference meets every three years.

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<http://www.africanelephantcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Manifesto.pdf>