

# THE AGONY OF IVORY



Panic-stricken elephants rush around in clouds of dust, the bloody smell of death driving them crazy, their terrible screams of fear and pain drowned out by the deafening pandemonium of the hovering helicopter and heavy caliber gunfire. Bullets thud sickeningly into flesh and smash through bone even as protective mothers reach defensively skyward towards on-board killers, their size and strength no match against the lethal enemy they cannot engage. And then suddenly the noise ends and silence hangs like a shroud over the carnage of dead and bleeding elephant bodies crumpled under the African sun. Heavy machinery rumbles in and limp, lifeless bodies are winched and hoisted aboard for the final journey to dismemberment in the elephant abattoir. Soon all that remains as evidence of the family massacre is a patch of scuffed and blood-soaked soil.

What you have just read is not horror fiction. It is the reality that stalks Africa's elephants in Southern Africa every day. And now South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe will go to this year's CITES Conference of the Parties 14 (COP14) in the Hague and seek international sanction to legitimately massacre elephants in exactly the manner described above so that they can sell their existing ivory stockpiles on the international market and then replenish those stockpiles by annually slaughtering thousands elephants. **DON'T LET THEM DO IT!!!**

**YOU** can help save Africa's elephants by using the information in this leaflet to generate public support for the campaign against legitimising the international trade in ivory. **YOU** can be a part of the effort to help save the elephants! **YOU** can support 11 other African elephant range nations who have endorsed a 20-year ban on ivory trade.<sup>1</sup>

Elephants are highly intelligent and social beings; they mourn for their dead, care for and nurture their young, and communicate with each other over vast distances using sub sonic rumbles. Please help us to ensure that they are not treated as mere commodities, to be turned into tins of meat and trinkets made from their skin, hair and tusks.

## The International Ban

Introduced at the 1989 CITES COP, and upheld at subsequent CITES COP's until 2002, the main purpose of the ivory ban was to neutralize the illegal ivory trade which was being sustained through the ruthless, relentless poaching of elephants in their tens of thousands each year. The ban, brought about by placing the African Elephant on Appendix 1 of CITES, led to a dramatic decrease in the demand for ivory in the USA and Europe. On the international market ivory prices plummeted and elephant poaching slowed down dramatically across much of east, western and central Africa.

## Opposition to the Ban

Consistent opposition to the ban has emanated from the conservation authorities and the governments of five southern African countries, namely, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi. These countries have in the past built up massive ivory and hide stockpiles from their culling programmes, and the ban on international trade in ivory made their culling programmes uneconomical. South Africa culled around 16 000 elephants in the Kruger National Park between the early 1970's and mid 1995 when a moratorium on culling was introduced.

Profits from the sale of ivory as well as meat and hides are huge, and these countries are not happy having to abide by a CITES ruling which denies them the opportunity of being able to "manage" their elephant populations as a form of "cash on the hoof". They sought exemption from the ban in order to be able to sell ivory and hides on the international market, and even signed a joint agreement to set up an ivory marketing centre – Southern African Centre for Ivory Marketing (SACIM) – located in Botswana, planning to sell ivory to non-CITES states such as Taiwan and Korea. Not only would this have been unethical, it would also have been in direct conflict with the terms of agreement by which they had originally signed up as CITES members. So much for their conservation integrity!



## Poaching

Encouraged by the efforts of the southern African countries to have their elephant populations downlisted to Appendix 2 of CITES, poaching in this part of Africa has continued, possibly even increased. Southern Africa continues to be an attractive destination for illegal ivory from elsewhere in Africa and, with massive corruption and official incompetence on its side, this illegal ivory easily finds its way to destinations in the Far East.

## Conditional Trade in Ivory

SA says that it currently has a stockpile of 30 tonnes – but they are seeking – along with Botswana and Namibia to sell 80 tonnes annually! This means they are pushing to kill 13 000 elephants in the region annually.

The CITES Secretariat agreed in principle to the sales in 2002, provided that the Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) system provided updated and thorough baseline data on poaching and population levels.<sup>2</sup>

CITES recently suspended the sale of 60 tons of stockpiled ivory held by South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. The resolution to suspend the sale followed concerns that, after nine years, MIKE data was “incomplete, unreliable and based on flawed assumptions”. Moreover, the MIKE data presented to the Cites Secretariat in Geneva made no mention of the ivory seized this year, which is thought to emanate from poaching activities.

The total quantity of ‘illegal’ ivory reported seized since 1998 to date is 151.430 tonnes.<sup>3</sup> **151 tonnes of ivory represents the illegal killing of approximately 24,380 elephants.**<sup>4</sup>

To date none of these quotas has been sold because the MIKE conditions for selling have not been met!

## What the Southern African Governments Say

- Their sound conservation practices have resulted in too many elephants - they are now a menace - they are destroying biodiversity.
- Communities living adjacent to parks where elephants range are in danger and are suffering crop and home damage due to elephants escaping from protected areas.
- They are irked that CITES suspended the sale of 60 tons of stockpiled ivory held by South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, arguing that it would not trigger an increase in poaching.
- Money from the sale of stockpiled ivory will help them to advance their conservation mandate and to fund and scale up anti-poaching activities.
- There is no contradiction in selling legal ivory and controlling poaching.
- There are no sales now and there is still an illegal market.
- South Africa has good systems in place to protect and manage their elephants.
- The countries wanting to sell are not beset by poaching problems.



## What ARA Says

The South African government wants to resume culling in its national parks in order to increase its ivory stockpile and so pressurize CITES into approving the sale of legally culled ivory – its all about money with no consideration for the rights and welfare of elephants.

- Eminent South African and international environmental scientists have repeatedly

told the South African government that elephant culling in South Africa is ecologically indefensible and should not be considered as a management tool – there is no ecologically sound evidence to support the claim of “too many elephants” in South or Southern Africa.

- The SA CITES National Committee claims of representivity<sup>5</sup> are a farce - it only accommodates those who are pro-ivory sales and pro-'sustainable use'. No other views are incorporated.
- There is a lack of credible and independently verifiable data in South Africa and other countries in the region.
- Elephant population figures quoted by the southern African governments (particularly Zimbabwe) are often inflated.<sup>6</sup>
- Ivory storage is hugely expensive and puts lives at risk – for example it costs Botswana 2 million pula per year to secure their ivory stockpiles.
- Theft from stockpiles is not being made public.
- ARA has been refused access to the recent figures it has supplied to the CITES ETIS (Elephant Trade Information System) for COP 14.
- 'Culling' is part of the larger framework of 'consumptive use' and abuse of wild animals in the region and South Africa.
- Poaching and the illegal killing of wild animals is a **HUGE** problem in the region and is having a devastating effect on elephants and other wild animals, but curiously this is not being acknowledged by the authorities and is also being consciously downplayed by them.<sup>7</sup>
- Legal trade in worked ivory products for domestic markets and tourist souvenirs (even if well regulated) provides an opportunity for laundering large quantities of illegal ivory. The continued existence of large volumes of “legal” ivory on the international market through further stockpile sales of raw ivory and exemptions for trade in ivory products from Namibia and Zimbabwe renders effective enforcement impossible and fuels the laundering of ivory from poached elephants through the market.
- By encouraging legal sales, we are encouraging rampant poaching elsewhere in Africa.

- Uncontrolled markets for ivory exist in many consumer countries, including China, the largest market. China and Japan (potential importing countries for future stockpile sales), are both destinations for major illegal ivory shipments and their domestic controls are insufficient to prevent the laundering of illegal ivory through legal trade.
- No independently verifiable data exists about the nature and extent of human/elephant interaction in the region and the South African authorities do not have any programmes in place to mitigate any potential human/elephant conflict. Where there's a will there is a way. Case specific initiatives to deal with potential conflicts are successful in other countries.
- Serious ethical issues. Ivory = dead elephants.

## THE MYTH OF “TOO MANY”

In spite of overwhelming evidence about the highly evolved social nature of elephant societies, their undisputed intelligence and the fact that killing them for any reason is ethically wrong and cruel, the South African government, whilst not submitting any elephant-related proposals of its own, has stated that it will support the proposals submitted to CITES COP 14 by Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe and supports the hysterical call from these Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries for elephants to be killed in large numbers.

South Africa has bought into the predictable pre-CITES uncorroborated “elephant overpopulation hype” in a manner that is embarrassingly amateurish. Supporting the SADC call for culling, hunting, and destruction of so-called vagrant and problem elephants, the attitude of the South African government tragically perpetuates the myth of an elephant overpopulation in Southern Africa.





LET'S KILL THE IVORY TRADE ONCE AND FOR ALL.

SUPPORT A TOTAL BAN ON IVORY.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Email or call the Tourist Boards of:

South Africa	<a href="mailto:info@southafrica.net">info@southafrica.net</a>	+2711 895 3000
Namibia	<a href="mailto:info@namibia.com">info@namibia.com</a>	+33 392 93920
Botswana	<a href="mailto:info@botswana.com">info@botswana.com</a>	+ 45 5903 3939
Zimbabwe	<a href="mailto:info@Zimbabwe.com">info@Zimbabwe.com</a>	+20 404 00302

Tell them that you will not visit their countries if they continue to 'cull' elephants and push to sell ivory. Let them know that the wild animals in their countries are more valuable to them alive than dead.

If you are South African:

- Write a letter/fax/e-mail to the Minister of Environmental Affairs Martinus van Schalkwyk. Tell him you support a total ban on ivory and that the government must not support any pro-ivory sale proposals submitted to CITES COP 14.  
Tel: +27 21 465 7250/1/2  
Fax: +27 21 465 3216  
E-mail: [mwillemse@deat.gov.za](mailto:mwillemse@deat.gov.za) (cc to [gibson@icon.co.za](mailto:gibson@icon.co.za))
- Write letters to newspapers.

Never buy souvenirs made from animal parts. The total quantity of 'illegal' ivory reported seized since 1998 to date is 151.430 tonnes. 151 tonnes of ivory represents the illegal killing of approximately 24,380 elephants. Be wary of bracelets that could be made from elephant hair, anything that looks like ivory or bone, and of "traditional" medicines, that could also contain elephant and other animal ingredients.

Visit [www.animalrightsafrica.org](http://www.animalrightsafrica.org) to learn more about what you can do to help animals in Africa. Or email us at: [info@animalrightsafrica.org](mailto:info@animalrightsafrica.org)



#### ENDNOTES

- Kenya, Mali, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire, Burundi, Rwanda, Nigeria, Southern Sudan, Sierra Leone, Congo Brazzaville and Chad.
- The MIKE programme was developed in reaction to the recognized need for better data on elephant poaching.
- IVORY UPDATE Prepared for the: 54th Meeting of the CITES Standing Committee 2nd – 6th October 2006, Geneva. Born Free Foundation and Species Survival Network
- Using an average tusk size of 3.45kg (Hunter, Martin and Miliken, Pachyderm No. 36, 2004). 72 tusks equate to about 48kg of ivory and 91 tusks equate to about 314kg of ivory and 360 tusks equate to 1,242kg of ivory. Calculation using an average tusk size of 3.45kg per tusk, and 1.8 tusks per elephant.
- Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism CITES National Committee Terms of Reference
- Zimbabwe Independent, 12 March 2007. See also reports by the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force.
- For more on the serious shortcomings in anti-poaching capacity and enforcement in the region: the recent ARA preliminary report can be downloaded at [www.animalrightsafrica.org](http://www.animalrightsafrica.org)