

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(88) 721 final

Brussels, 22 December 1988

Communication from the Commission
on the conservation of the African Elephant

Subject: the conservation of
the African Elephant.

I. Introduction

1. The elephant plays an important role in the ecology of the African continent and its value for tourism and as an ivory producer also make it an important economic resource.

2. Desertification and habitat destruction as a result of land-use conflicts between elephants and humans, are likely to limit elephant numbers in the long term, but there is no doubt that the illegal ivory trade is reducing population levels of the species most severely.

Since the early 1970's, when world demand for ivory increased, especially in eastern Asia, elephant populations have declined at an alarming rate. Poaching is believed to halve elephant populations every ten years and only an estimated 750,000 elephants remain in Africa today.

Conventional trade sanctions and conservation action in the field are failing. Without immediate action, a strong political will and an unprecedented level of international co-operation, poaching will result in the extinction of elephants in many parts of Africa.

3. The African elephant is included in Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In the framework of this Convention,

the international trade in ivory is subject to a quota system that was introduced in 1986. The system provides a systematic framework for each country to organize its ivory trade while at the same time providing an international trade control system. In spite thereof, most of the ivory leaving Africa - with an estimated annual export value of US\$ 120 million, almost twice the amount spent on wildlife conservation - is illegal. Profits end up in the pockets of poachers and middlemen, where a legal and controlled trade could bring significant economic benefits to the continent without endangering the survival of the elephant.

4. CITES is being implemented in the Community since 1 January 1984 under Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82¹. This Regulation subjects imports of live and dead animals and parts and derivatives of a great many species, among which the African elephant, to stricter measures than those provided for under the Convention. Article 10.1.b. of the Regulation stipulates that an import permit shall only be issued where:

- it is clear that the capture or collection of the specimen will not have a harmful effect on the conservation of species or on the extent of the territory occupied by the populations in question of the species,

- the applicant provides proof by means of documents issued by the competent authorities of the country of origin that the specimen has been obtained in accordance with the legislation on protection of the

¹OJ L 384 of 31.12.1982, p.1

species in question,

- there are no other requirements relating to conservation of the species which militate against issue.

In accordance with the provisions concerned, imports of ivory into the Community are prohibited in case the ivory was exported from a country of origin in a year for which the country concerned submitted a zero quota, or where it was otherwise traded in non-compliance with the CITES Ivory Quota System.

II Recent international action to stem the illegal trade in ivory and to halt the decline of the African elephant and the Community's contribution thereto

1. The World Conservation Union (IUCN), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), TRAFFIC, Wildlife Conservation International (WCI) and the Commission of the European Communities have - in co-operation with the CITES Secretariat - formed the African Elephant Conservation Coordinating Group (AECCG). The purpose of the AECCG is to provide a coordinated and cohesive approach to the conservation of the African elephant and to stem the sharp decline in the species by stopping the illegal ivory trade and improving the ability of African countries to maintain ecologically viable elephant populations.
2. The AECCG is based on a unique co-operation agreement between the main donor organizations involved in conservation programmes in Africa. Each participating organization has made a significant commitment towards the implementation of projects designed to conserve the African elephant and each has considerable experience in developing and implementing large-scale conserva-

tion projects. Organizations having a similar orientation can co-opt.

3. The AECCG developed a Strategy and a Comprehensive Plan of Action for Conserving the African Elephant, the aims of which are to:

- Identify the most effective options for containing or ending the illegal ivory trade by gaining better understanding of what drives the trade, how much ivory is involved, where it moves, who benefits from it and how the market could be made sustainable yet profitable to Africa;
- Take urgent field actions to save selected elephant populations (baseline populations) that collectively will conserve the essence of the species and maintain its ecological role recognizing that national capabilities to conserve and manage elephants and other wildlife more effectively should be built around these emergency programmes;
- Mobilize coordinated political actions and interventions targeted toward those individuals, political bodies and government agencies who hold responsibility for, or can influence effective action toward, conserving African elephants;
- Build popular support for conservation by communicating the problems confronting elephants and the role they play in Africa, to the public in producer and consumer countries.

The AECCG will provide the necessary coordination, monitor the effectiveness of the different components and review and revise the Strategy and the Action Plan where necessary.

The total costs for the first three years of implementation amount to US\$ 12 to 15 million.

Policy recommendations emanating from the various activities will be presented to the CITES African Elephant Working Group prior to the next Conference of the Parties to CITES in October 1989.

4. The Commission substantiated its initial commitment to the Strategy and the Action Plan through direct funding of a number of projects under budget line 946. Its contribution of ECU 500,000 from the 1988 budget, combined with contributions to larger EDF funded projects, which contribute to the protection of wildlife in a number of the ACP countries most directly concerned, ensures the implementation of the Strategy and of projects under the Action Plan with immediate effect. As a result, action in the field is already on the way.
5. The Commission intends to continue its commitment to and financial support of the Strategy and the Comprehensive Action Plan for Conserving the African Elephant in the years to come and considers it essential that Member States make similar commitments.

In addition to the measures referred to in the last paragraph of point I.4 above, the Commission, under Article 10.1.b. of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3626/82 and in accordance with the procedure prescribed in Article 21 thereof, intends to restrict ivory imports into the Community, as follows:

After 1 January 1990, the commercial importation of African elephant ivory shall be prohibited:

- a) from an exporting or re-exporting country that is not a

Party to CITES;

- b) from an exporting or re-exporting country that is a Party to CITES, but which does not adhere to the CITES Ivory Quota System;
- c) from an exporting country that is a Party to CITES adhering to the CITES Ivory Quota System, but which
 - does not implement an elephant conservation programme based on the best available scientific information,
 - does not base its ivory export quota submissions on such information,
 - makes insufficient progress in obtaining the necessary scientific data concerned,
 - exceeds its agreed ivory export quota, or
 - does not effectively monitor and control the taking of elephants and its internal and international trade in ivory,
- d) from a re-exporting country that imports ivory from a country referred to in a) to c) above.

The import of ivory confiscated and disposed of in compliance with recommendations of the Conference of the Parties to CITES on the subject shall be exempted from this prohibition.

It is worth noting that the U.S. recently adopted similar measures.

Under Articles 9 and 132 of the Lomé Convention, the Commission is committed to inform the ACP States of its intention to take measures that might affect their interests and to hold consultations should they be requested.

In conformity with the above provisions the Commission shall inform the ACP States of its intention to restrict ivory imports

as described above, and will hold consultations as may be requested.

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