



## Amending Decision 14.77 on a Decision-making Mechanism for Process of Trade in Elephant Ivory

(Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia,  
Central African Republic, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire  
and Kenya)

### PROPOSAL: CoP16 Doc. 37

Proposal to amend Decision 14.77 on a decision-making mechanism for a future trade in elephant ivory

### PROPOSERS:

Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Kenya

### IFAW RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT

#### Analysis

- IFAW fully supports the assertion in the proposal by Benin et al. that it is the fundamental responsibility of the Conference of the Parties to ensure that any eventual decision to allow ivory trade in the future in no way stimulates, encourages, causes or provokes elephant poaching or illegal ivory trade. Indeed an essential element of any decision by the Parties to allow trade in a CITES-listed species is a prior, affirmative determination that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. Trade, including possibly legal trade, in ivory is having extreme detrimental impacts on elephants in the wild.
- Though current sources of data about the illegal killing of elephants and illegal ivory trade cannot conclusively prove direct causal links between CITES-sanctioned stockpile sales in 1999 and 2008 and increased rates of poaching and illegal ivory trade, the correlations between decisions to allow stockpile sales, actual sales, and sharp increases in poaching

and illegal ivory seizures over the last few years are too distinct to be ignored, and the complexity and interconnectedness of the global illegal trade in ivory must be taken into account when making decisions about the future of elephants.

- According to all sources of information used by CITES Parties to ascertain the status of elephants impacted by ivory trade, elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade has reached crisis proportions. Illegal killing of elephants has increased in all four sub-regions of Africa, including areas of Southern Africa previously thought to be safe from poachers and their networks, and illegal ivory trade has reached a level not seen since 1989, when CITES banned the commercial trade in ivory following a similar wholesale decimation of elephants for ivory continent-wide.
- And, the trend in illegal killing of elephants mirrors closely the incredible growth in consumer purchasing power in China and other ivory consuming markets – a power that will only lead to the extermination of elephants through their range if swift and decisive action is not taken by range, consumer, and indeed all states with an interest in protecting elephants for future generations. The Parties to CITES must take all of these factors into account when making decisions that could impact the continued survival of elephants throughout much of their range in Africa.
- Thus, IFAW believes that if any credible evidence exists that decisions to allow limited ivory trade (i.e.



stockpile sales) by the Parties to CITES could drive increases in poaching and illegal ivory trade, the trade should be avoided until such time as clear evidence indicates otherwise. Not until such a time that poaching and illicit trade are under control and it can be shown that legal trade does not drive illegal activities should legal trade be considered under any future decision-making mechanism for future ivory trade.

- Thus, IFAW urges Parties to support the decision proposed by Benin et al., which would require Parties to assess any possible future decision-making mechanism for ivory trade with respect to its conservation impact on elephant populations nationally, continentally, and globally, and would ensure that any decision-making mechanism for future ivory trade is made in accordance with the vision, goals, and prioritized objectives of the African Elephant Action Plan, the first of which is to reduce elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade. IFAW notes that the language suggested by the proponents could also be incorporated into the draft decision proposed by the Secretariat in CoP16 Doc. 36 relating to the decision-making mechanism for future ivory trade. ■