

WWF position on elephant ivory trade

WWF is committed to conserving elephant populations across Africa and Asia. Along with initiatives to protect their habitats and reduce human/elephant conflict, WWF is at the forefront of global efforts to stop elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade, which threaten the future of elephant populations across Africa.

At this time

- WWF does not support the resumption of the international commercial trade in elephant ivory.
- WWF strongly discourages the consumption of elephant ivory products.
- WWF supports the closure of domestic elephant ivory markets that are driving poaching and illegal trade.

WWF does not support the resumption of the international, commercial elephant ivory trade - now and until a demonstrably effective, enforceable and conservation-based management and compliance system is in place and adhered to by source, transit and consumer countries.

WWF considers that the current, global trade ban alone will not solve the ongoing elephant poaching crisis, since this threat is largely driven by illegal trade, facilitated by weak enforcement, and high levels of demand related to rising affluence in many consumer countries. Hence, WWF believes that, to have positive impact on elephants, the focus of conservation efforts must also be on the rigorous implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strong national plans in key countries to counter poaching and illegal trade of elephant ivory, and to change consumer behaviour.

WWF acknowledges that, under condition of good governance, sustainable use can benefit conservation. WWF recognizes the different approaches to managing elephants utilized across Africa and the potential funds that can be raised from these activities for conservation and communities. In this regard, the consumptive use approach adopted by certain African countries through well-managed trophy hunting has proved successful for elephant conservation in some instances.

WWF's position on ivory trade is based on the realities of current market dynamics: the low levels of traceability; the weak controls that are leading to illegal sales under the cover of legal outlets; the enforcement challenges; and the threat that wildlife crime poses to certain elephant populations at this time.

WWF supports the closure of domestic markets for elephant ivory worldwide. When markets that drive poaching and illegal trade are closed, it is recognised that pragmatic exceptions can be made in narrow categories of antique products (e.g. cutlery, musical instruments, furniture with ivory inlay, etc.) where a demonstrably effective, enforceable and conservation-based management and compliance system is in place, and which thus would not pose a major risk of illegal trade.

Further clarification of WWF's position on the issues of: (a) domestic ivory markets; and (b) ivory from species other than elephants; are provided in an addendum overleaf.

Addendum

(a) On domestic ivory markets

The NET position states that:

When markets that drive poaching and illegal trade are closed, it is recognised that pragmatic exceptions can be made in narrow categories of antique products (e.g. cutlery, musical instruments, furniture with ivory inlay, etc.) where a demonstrably effective, enforceable and conservation-based management and compliance system is in place, and which thus would not pose a major risk of illegal trade.

The precise nature of the exceptions depends on the national and cultural context but in no circumstances should they propose a risk to wild elephant populations.

WWF recognises that certain antique markets such as those in the Member States of the EU and those in the US are not direct drivers of elephant poaching. This does not preclude some of these countries from choosing to take a stricter approach on this issue than the NET position demands.

(b) On trade in ivory from other animals

- (i) The helmeted hornbill is Critically Endangered and is listed on Appendix I of CITES. WWF opposes any international or domestic trade in its ivory and calls on countries where trade is occurring to close the markets.
- (ii) Narwhal and walrus are included on Appendices II and III respectively of CITES, and listed as Least Concern and Vulnerable respectively. Harvest and trade are sufficiently well managed that trade does not pose a conservation risk at this time, so that a ban would needlessly compromise the livelihoods of indigenous people who live with these species.
- (iii) Sperm whale and orca whale, listed on Appendices I and II of CITES respectively, were utilised in the past for carving, as a by-product of hunting. WWF is not seeking a ban in trade of antique whale ivory items, which are generally easy to distinguish because of the carving style, but opposes a resumption of harvest and exploitation of cetacean species for commercial trade.
- (iv) Hippopotamus, included on Appendix II of CITES and listed as Vulnerable, is depleted across Central Africa but elsewhere populations remain stable. However WWF would not encourage consumption of hippo ivory.
- (v) Mammoth ivory is widely traded in Asia and other parts of the world. It is used both for carvings and to restore antiques such as furniture and musical instruments that previously contained small amounts of elephant ivory. Because of the size of the Asian elephant and mammoth ivory markets, and increasing demand for ivory items, WWF is concerned that elephant ivory could be laundered as mammoth ivory (for example by mixing illegal elephant and legal mammoth ivory together or by falsification of documents, thus misrepresenting the export of carved elephant tusks as legal mammoth ivory). Elephant ivory and mammoth ivory items can be difficult to differentiate, and only experts can recognise the differences on sight. In addition, there are concerns that widespread consumption of mammoth ivory could complicate efforts to change the behaviour of consumers of elephant ivory. As evidenced in the Russian Arctic, industrialized methods for retrieval

of mammoth tusks can be very destructive, causing inter alia destruction of fragile tundra vegetation cover, permafrost melt and sedimentation of water courses. WWF does not object to the use of mammoth ivory for specialist restoration purposes or by Arctic indigenous peoples for carvings sold in artisanal markets but calls for greater vigilance in the wider market. This position also applies to mastodon ivory. Similar considerations apply to mastodon ivory. Neither mammoths nor mastodons are listed on any CITES Appendices.

(vi) WWF does not oppose trade in ivory from warthog, which is listed as Least Concern and is not listed on any CITES Appendices.

Finally, it should be noted that WWF's position on ivory trade does not apply to hunting trophies that have been obtained legally and in accordance with the principles outlined in WWF's position on trophy hunting.