



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
ENVIRONMENT  
Directorate F - Global Sustainable Development  
**ENV.F - The Director**

Brussels,  
DG ENV /AS/GdR

**Subject: your letter “Save Elephants!!! Impose a total ivory ban in the European Union!!!”**

Dear Petitioner

Thank you for your letters addressed to President Juncker on ivory trade

The European Commission is very conscious of the importance for the EU to lead the way against ivory trafficking. There should be no doubt about our firm commitment to combat elephant poaching and ivory trafficking. Addressing this problem is a cornerstone of the EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking ("EU Action Plan<sup>1</sup>") and the EU has recently adopted numerous initiatives to this end.

In line with the EU Action Plan, the EU has substantially stepped up its engagement in Africa and Asia, which are by far the regions most affected by ivory trafficking.

The EU is the world's most important donor for biodiversity conservation and against wildlife crime, notably through its support to the international Consortium for Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC<sup>2</sup>), national authorities and civil society organisations. The EU has recently increased its financial engagement in this field in support of a wide range of programmes designed to strengthen law enforcement, ensure a sound management of protected areas, create economic activities for local communities or reduce the demand for illegal wildlife products.

The EU is also a very active player in the CITES Convention, where it has been pushing to maintain the ban on international ivory trade and for targeted recommendations against ivory trafficking and sanctions towards countries failing to adopt the required actions in that area.

Domestically, the EU has considerably reinforced its enforcement response against illegal ivory trade into, within or from the EU. Addressing ivory trafficking is a priority for all enforcement agencies in the EU Member States, which have conducted unprecedented investigations against these criminal activities and have seized more than 2 tons of illegal ivory in 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/WAP\\_EN\\_WEB.PDF](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/WAP_EN_WEB.PDF)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cites.org/eng/prog/iccwc.php>

The current rules governing ivory trade in the EU are already strict. They go beyond the requirements set out in CITES and are more stringent than the rules in place in most other countries, including, in some instances, the rules recently enacted in the United States of America.

The Commission has shown its readiness to tighten the rules on ivory trade where circumstances require it: in line with the EU Action Plan, the Commission adopted a guidance document in May 2017<sup>3</sup>, recommending that EU Member States do not issue any export document for raw ivory any longer. In practice, this has led to a suspension of such exports. This decision was taken in view of the increase in legal trade in old ivory tusks from the EU to Asia observed in recent years, creating a risk that such trade could be used as cover for illegal trade in ivory tusks (which represent the largest share of ivory trafficking) and fuel the demand for ivory in consumer markets.

For the rest of ivory trade, the Commission guidance document provides for additional scrutiny to ensure that only legal ivory items can be traded in or from the EU.

In addition, the Commission organised between 15 September and 8 December 2017 a survey on ivory trade in the EU<sup>4</sup>, in response to the call by many stakeholders that additional restrictions on ivory trade should be put in place at EU level. A dedicated meeting on this issue with many interest groups (NGOs, antique sector, music sector, ivory carving/production, hunting organisations, online trade, museums...) took place in Brussels on 8 December 2017. The purpose of this survey was to gather data on legal and illegal ivory in the EU, as well as to collect views on future EU priorities against ivory trafficking, including on the need to further tighten the current EU rules on ivory trade.

The Commission will provide an analysis of this public consultation and its follow-up as part of its progress report on the EU Action Plan, to be adopted by July 2018.

Yours sincerely,

Astrid SCHOMAKER

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<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/guidance\\_ivory.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/guidance_ivory.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-ivory-trade-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/public-consultation-ivory-trade-eu_en)