



January 22 2014

## Appeal to EU Governments:

### **Destruction of Seized Ivory Will Send clear Message against Illegal Wildlife Trade**

We, a coalition of NGOs concerned about the current African poaching crisis, are calling upon EU governments to demonstrate their commitment to the fight to save the African elephant by destroying their seized illegal ivory.

The illegal trade in ivory from African elephants has been growing at an alarming rate. The raw data from ETIS (the Elephant Trade Information System) for large-scale ivory seizures in 2013 already yielded more than 41 tonnes and represents the greatest quantity of ivory confiscated over the last 25 years. Tens of thousands of elephants are being killed for their ivory every year and poachers are becoming ever-more sophisticated in carrying out their ruthless actions.

**The current poaching crisis not only constitutes an immense threat to one of our most iconic animals, but it is also a matter of global security.** The illegal wildlife trade now generates an estimated \$19 billion per year and has become the fourth most lucrative illegal activity behind drugs, counterfeiting, and human trafficking. As demand for ivory as a luxury product keeps growing, prices soar. As profits are high and penalties very low, transnational organised crime groups are increasingly taking over. Recent reports have also uncovered that armed rebel and militia groups like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Al-Shabaab have benefitted from illegal ivory trade as a source of funds for their terrorist activities.

**To combat this ever-growing threat, we urge your government to join others in sending a strong signal against illegal wildlife trade.** On November 14, the US government per order of President Obama publicly destroyed nearly six tons of seized illegal ivory in Denver, Colorado, sending a clear message to the world that it will not stand idly by as elephants are being slaughtered into extinction. The Philippines, Gabon and Kenya have also publicly destroyed seized ivory within the last two and a half years. The Chinese government destroyed 6 tons of its ivory stockpile on 6 January 2014. The French government has also announced that it will destroy its ivory stockpile. The event is to take place on 6 February 2014 in the margins of the London Summit on Illegal Wildlife Trade (13 February 2014). Gabon, to its credit, also undertook an independent audit of the stockpiles before destroying them, so that the public could be reassured that the quantity destroyed corresponded to the amount stated. We strongly urge your government to follow suit. Destruction of seized ivory, following an independent audit, would give the fight against poaching much-needed momentum and significantly raise further awareness of the issue, especially if it could be undertaken in time for the London summit, which will be attended by Ministers and members of the Royal Family.

**The destruction of ivory stockpiles - no matter how big - will highlight the plight of tens of thousands of elephants that are being killed each year to supply the traffickers. It will hopefully educate consumers that**

**in buying ivory they are putting elephants' lives and possibly the future of the species at risk, and would thus contribute to reducing demand. It will encourage governments in elephant range States, where stockpile thefts have been a problem in a number of countries, to follow your example. Last but not least it will demonstrate solidarity with African and Asian countries in their fight against elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade.**

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