

c/o WCS EU  
Boulevard Louis Schmidt 64  
1040 Brussels, Belgium

Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius  
Environment, Oceans and Fisheries  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**Subject: Closure of domestic ivory markets in the European Union (EU)**

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

We, the undersigned organisations, urge the European Commission to submit an ambitious proposal to close ivory trade from the EU market, as requested by the EU Council Conclusions on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 adopted on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We are indeed disappointed that the latest draft proposal by the European Commission to further tighten the rules on EU ivory trade, circulated in early October, will not close the EU ivory market and lacks the ambition called for in the recently adopted EU Council Conclusions and in Resolutions adopted by the European Parliament in the past years. If the EU is serious about fighting elephant poaching, it should not just tighten rules, it must close its domestic elephant ivory market and implement a ban on all ivory sales, imports and (re)exports. We, therefore, urge you to revise the draft proposal so that it properly responds to these new EU Council Conclusions.

The proposed measures are complex, lack clarity, and will be difficult to implement and enforce. They would only slightly tighten intra-EU trade rules for pre-1947 worked items, and while they would prohibit the trade of items imported or acquired between 1975 and 1990, the laundering of ivory and the misrepresentation of the age of worked items would render them ineffective.

We call for a prohibition of all elephant ivory imports, re-exports and intra-EU trade for commercial purposes, with only the following limited exemptions<sup>1</sup>:

- Musical instruments made prior to 1975, containing less than 20% ivory by volume.
- "*De minimis*" items made prior to 1947, containing less than 5% ivory by volume.
- Sales to and between officially accredited museums.

---

<sup>1</sup> This position is supported by 28 wildlife conservation, animal protection, and environmental organisations:  
<https://brussels.wcs.org/Portals/0/Brussels/NGO%20ivory.pdf?ver=2020-11-04-124408-250>

The above restrictions would not apply to non-commercial inheritance, transfer, legacy, gifting, or donations. These rules would make regulations far less complicated for both the public and enforcement officials.

Elephant populations continue to decline significantly in Africa and only bold action can save this iconic species from becoming extinct in many parts of its range. A recent article published in *Nature* in June 2020 reports that poaching for ivory has not diminished across most of Africa since 2011. Allowing any trade in ivory fuels further demand, reinforces the social acceptability of ivory and increases opportunities to launder illegal ivory.

We, therefore, urge you to revise the proposal currently on the table to deliver on the longstanding request of the European Parliament and EU citizens, and respond to the new EU Council Conclusions asking for the closure of the EU domestic ivory market. This constitutes a unique opportunity to demonstrate global leadership and to urge other countries to do the same.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Janice Weatherley-Singh  
*Director, EU Strategic Relations*  
WCS EU



Mary Rice  
*Executive Director*  
Environmental Investigation Agency, UK (EIA)



Staci McLennan  
*EU Office Director*  
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)



Dr. Joanna Swabe  
*Senior Director of Public Affairs*  
Humane Society International/Europe (HSI)



Mark Jones, veterinarian  
*Head of Policy*  
Born Free Foundation (BFF)



Herbert Lust  
*Vice-President and Managing Director*  
Conservation International Europe (CI)



Andrea Hoepfner  
*Chair of the Board*  
*Pro Wildlife*



Ilaria Di Silvestre  
*Programme Leader Wildlife*  
*Eurogroup for Animals*



Georgina Lamb  
*Chief Executive*  
*David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF)*



Vera Weber  
*President and CEO*  
*Fondation Franz Weber (FFW)*



Zak Smith  
*Director, International Wildlife Conservation*  
*Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)*



Dr. Rebecca Drury  
*Head of Wildlife Trade*  
*Fauna & Flora International (FFI)*



Charles Mayhew MBE  
*Chief Executive*  
*Tusk Trust*



Myfanwy Griffith  
*Executive Director*  
*European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA)*



Dominic Jermy  
*Director General*  
*Zoological Society of London (ZSL)*

