

For the attention of Jean-Claude Juncker, EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, incoming EU Commission President, and Antti Juhani Rinne, Prime Minister of Finland and President of the EU Council of Ministers

PLEASE DON'T OVERTURN THE CITES BAN ON SENDING BABY AFRICAN ELEPHANTS TO FOREIGN ZOOS AND CIRCUSES

The world has been shocked to see distressing video and photos of terrified baby African elephants being rounded up and snatched from their families in the wild, to be shipped to zoos and circuses around the world.

This week, 46 governments attending the triennial Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)), in a landmark decision voted in committee to end the barbaric practice of capturing live wild-caught baby and juvenile elephants for this heartless trade. In doing so they voiced their overwhelming support for the 32 African nations who advocated for a ban on all such transports of live elephants, and restrict these transports exclusively to *in situ* conservation programmes or secure areas in the wild within the African elephant's natural range. An open letter by 55 elephant experts this week agrees entirely with this position.

Shamefully, the European Union wants to overturn this historic victory. The CITES Parties will still need to take a final vote next week and the EU intends to vote against the ban. If it does so the EU's vote will condemn wild-caught elephants to a lifetime in unnatural captivity just so that zoos and circuses in the EU and elsewhere can continue to have a steady flow of live elephants from the wild.

Elephants are social and emotional creatures who form strong family bonds and suffer tremendously in captivity. Captured elephants can face horrific abuse during the capture process. Footage of wild-caught baby elephants awaiting export from Zimbabwe shows calves being beaten and kicked during capture. Some elephants have died during transit or shortly after arrival. Elephants who survive the long journey have been observed living in dark, barren cells in the holding facilities and zoos, in stark and heartbreaking contrast to the vast wilderness in which they naturally roam with family groups and larger clans.

We call on all EU Environment ministers and the Finnish presidency, representing the EU as a 28 voting bloc at the CITES meeting, to reflect the position of the majority of African elephant range states, the great majority of EU citizens, and leading elephant experts and support the proposal to end the export of wild-caught elephants for captive use.

It would be obscene for the EU to endorse snatching wild baby elephants and condemning these beautiful leviathans to a life of captive misery.

Signatories:

Alan Carr, Alesha Dixon, Bella Lack, Bill Bailey, Bonnie Wright, Brigitte Bardot, Bryan Adams, Dan Richardson, Deborah Meaden, Dougie Poynter, Evanna Lynch, Gordon Buchanan, Jenny Seagrove, Joanna Lumley, John Challis, Judi Dench, Kate Humble, Lauren St John, Leona Lewis, Lily Travers, Brendan Courtney, Marc Abrahams, Mollie King, Nicky Campbell, Pamela Anderson, Paul O'Grady, Peter Egan, Ricky Gervais, Robert Lindsay, Rula Lenska, Simon Pegg, Susie Dent, Thandie Newton, Virginia McKenna