

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2019, Geneva

**Open letter to EU Environment Ministers, Karmenu Vella, EU Environment Commissioner and Krista Mikkonen, President of the EU Environment Council**

**Copy: Jean-Claude Juncker, EU Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, incoming EU Commission President and David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament**

**END THE LIVE TRADE IN WILD-CAUGHT AFRICAN ELEPHANTS FOR CAPTIVE EXPLOITATION.**

CITES Conference of the Parties 18. Geneva, Switzerland.

In a significant step forward, delegates at the world's largest conference on international trade in endangered species have voted to end the cruel capture and export of wild African elephants from certain southern African countries to zoos and other captive facilities.

The vote, which was taken in Committee, will need to be confirmed next week at the plenary session of the conference of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

During the Committee debate, the **European Union and the United States both spoke against the ban** but while the USA voted against, the EU did not vote at all, since a number of EU Member States were not accredited when the vote was taken. **A ban on the live trade would mean that zoos and circuses across the EU would no longer have access to a steady flow of wild live elephants.**

The African Elephant Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission has stated that "... it does not endorse the removal of African elephants from the wild for any captive use", believing there to be "no direct benefit for [their] in-situ conservation". In addition, at the Addis Ababa African Elephant Coalition Summit in June 2018, 30 African states confirmed that the only appropriate and acceptable destinations for live wild African elephants are in-situ conservation programmes within their natural habitat.

It has now been confirmed that this issue will be brought back, by proponents of continued capture of and trade in wild elephants, to the final plenary session of the CITES meeting for ratification and, at that point, debate will be reopened which means the landmark, positive decision taken in Committee may be overturned.

We cannot let this happen.

We would remind the EU that elephant exports from two countries with their population on Appendix II are already restricted to in-situ sites and therefore the Proposal which the EU opposes is consistent with existing precedent. In addition, in 2019 a legal challenge to elephant live trade export was lodged with the Zimbabwean High Court and until this process has run its course, live exports may not proceed.

**As it stands, we understand that the EU, contrary to the majority views of EU citizens, will use this opportunity to vote against ending the live trade in wild-caught elephants from Zimbabwe and Botswana to zoos, circuses and other captive facilities.**

We the undersigned organisations, call on all EU Environment Ministers to **support the Proposal to end the export of wild-caught elephants for captive use** and that the only destination for wild-caught elephants should be in situ conservation programmes or secure areas in the wild within the species' natural range, as the 32-member African Elephant Coalition and many elephant experts have long been advocating.

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#### ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING:

Fondation Franz Weber, Switzerland

David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, UK

Species Survival Network

Born Free Foundation UK

Born Free USA

Humane Society International

World Animal Protection

The Pan African Sanctuary Alliance

Four Paws International

Eurogroup for Animals

Robin des Bois

Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute, Philippines

Pro Wildlife, Germany

SEY Finnish Federation for Animal Welfare

OneKind

The Wolf Action Group

Fondation Brigitte Bardot

Dyrenes Beskyttelse

Deutsche Tierschutzbund

FAADA

Animal Defenders International

LFDA

ISPCA

Animal Friends Croatia

Catholic Concern for Animals

Natural Resources Defense Council

IPPL

Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund

Animal Welfare Institute

People and Earth Solidarity Law Network

Gordon Consulting, New Zealand

Environmental Investigation Agency, UK

RSPCA