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Media Release

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Asian region to discuss better wild elephant protection

Elephant protection will be on the agenda for discussion by delegates to an Asian regional meeting for two global wildlife conventions in Bangkok this week.

The Asian Regional Joint Preparatory meeting for CITES (the Convention on Illegal Trade in Endangered Species of wild flora and fauna) and the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) will take place from 1-5 August at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

The regional meeting is expected to consider five major proposals to protect elephants that were submitted by African countries to the 17th Conference of the Parties (CoP17) of CITES, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September [24 September to 5 October].

CITES is a global treaty established to ensure international trade does not threaten the survival of wild animals and plants.

The African Elephant Coalition (of 29 African countries) includes the majority of African elephant range states and is calling on the world to join them in ensuring the survival of elephants.

The AEC's five major proposals provide an integrated package to protect elephants by strengthening international CITES law. These include:

- Listing all elephants in CITES Appendix 1
- Closure of domestic ivory markets
- Guidance on Ivory stockpile management and destruction
- Ending the Decision Making Mechanism (DMM) for a process of trade in ivory
- Restricting trade in live elephants

[See attached PDF for full details of the AEC's five proposals.]

In the last 33 years, 61 percent of Africa's elephants have been lost as a result of the ivory trade. The five proposals by the AEC are intended to end the trade and afford elephants the highest protection under international law.

Fifty-nine NGOs and individuals from around the world are now calling on their governments to respect the will of the majority of African elephant range states in their efforts to overcome the scourge of poaching.

The Montreux Manifesto, agreed at a meeting of the Coalition in Montreux, Switzerland in June, launched a social media campaign to gain support for the five-part package.

"The Montreux Manifesto shows that our message is clear," says Bourama Niagaté from Mali, a member of the Council of the Elders for the Coalition. "We need to all pull together for the sake of Africa's elephants."

The Coalition expressed its deep concern about the crisis facing elephants and its conviction that a ban on international and domestic trade in ivory is the best way to protect elephants.

"CITES saved African elephants from certain extinction 27 years ago by listing them on Appendix I," says Vera Weber, president of the Swiss-based Fondation Franz Weber, a partner organization of the AEC.

"Since then the protection of elephants has been weakened, and poaching has escalated," she says. "The AEC has charted a path to relist elephants on Appendix I and ban the ivory trade once and for all."

The Manifesto appeals to governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations for their support, and calls on citizens around the world to ask their respective governments and CITES representatives to support the five proposals and to help the Coalition in its mission to list all elephants in Appendix I.

"The Montreux Manifesto is a call to action on behalf of elephants," says Patrick Omondi, Co-Chair of the AEC. "We are fighting a war in Africa because CITES relaxed the ban on ivory trade and allowed sales. The AEC is committed to reinstating that ban as the best way to protect elephants."

ENDS

African Elephant Coalition – Five Proposals to CITES

The five proposals submitted by the AEC to CITES are:

1. Listing all elephants in CITES Appendix I

The proposal seeks to unify all African elephant populations and their range States in one Appendix I listing, ending split-listing through the transfer from Appendix II of the populations of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The African elephant as a species is not constrained within State borders, nor indeed are national populations. Many are shared with more than one country, arguing for a unified approach to their regulation under CITES. This action seeks to gain the maximum protection for elephants by simplifying and improving enforcement and sending a clear message to the world that ivory cannot be legally traded under international law.

2. Closure of domestic ivory markets

This proposal calls for closure of all domestic markets for commercial trade in raw and worked ivory. Closing all internal markets in range, transit and end-user consumer States would drastically reduce opportunities for the laundering of poached ivory, under the guise that it is antique, “pre-Convention” or otherwise legally acquired. It would also reinforce the message that all ivory sales should be stopped, as they are dangerous for elephants.

3. Ivory stockpile destruction and management

This proposal builds on two earlier papers submitted to the CITES Standing Committee in 2014 and 2016, which led to recognition by the Committee of the destructions of ivory stockpiles by governments since 2011, and a recommendation to develop guidance on stockpile management. It endorses ivory destruction, encourages the highest possible standards of stockpile management, and requests the CITES Secretariat to provide the best available technical guidance on stockpile inventories, audit, management and disposal, including DNA sampling to determine the origin of items in the stockpile.

4. The Decision-Making Mechanism for a process of trade in ivory (DMM)

The proposal recommends that the CoP should end negotiations on the DMM. In view of the concerted global efforts to reduce demand for ivory, the existence of negotiations on a DMM process to legalize trade sends precisely the wrong message – that a legal and sustainable ivory trade is possible, and could reopen in the not-too-distant future. The DMM not only poses unacceptable risks for elephants, but has also generated valid objections among Parties, as shown by the fact that CITES has been unable to make any progress in negotiations after 9 years.

5. Restricting trade in live elephants

The proposal aims to end the export of African elephants outside their natural range, including export to zoos and other captive facilities overseas. Such exports provide no direct benefit to

conservation of elephants in their range States (as noted by the IUCN-SSC African Elephant Specialist Group), and there are considerable objections within Africa on ethical and cultural grounds. African elephants, along with their ivory, should remain in Africa.

Notes to Editors

- The African Elephant Coalition was established in 2008 in Bamako, Mali. It comprises 29 member countries from Africa united by a common goal: “a viable and healthy elephant population free of threats from international ivory trade.” The meeting in Montreux from 24-26 June was the seventh meeting of the Coalition since it was founded.
- The 29 member countries of the African Elephant Coalition include: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo and Uganda. Of the 29 countries represented in the Coalition, 26 of them are African elephant range States, comprising the majority (70 percent) of the 37 countries in which African elephants occur in the wild.
- [Fondation Franz Weber](#) (FFW), based in Switzerland, has been campaigning for the survival of the African elephant and the complete ban of the trade in ivory for 40 years. FFW has been an observer to CITES since 1989 and a partner of the African Elephant Coalition since its creation in 2008. The Foundation managed Fazao-Malfakassa National Park in Togo for 25 years, and as a partner of UNESCO, it supports projects to protect wildlife and elephants in Central Africa. FFW supports an elephant enhancement program by tourism (Elewatch) and a study on anti-poaching programs in African protected areas (in partnership with IUCN PAPACO) to evaluate the measures in place and facilitate improvement.

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