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The 27 of the 32-member State African Elephant Coalition (AEC) convened for a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, on 11 – 13th February 2019, to agree on the strategy for the protection of elephants in preparation for the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES CoP18) to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 23rd May – 3rd June this year.

At the outset of the meeting, AEC delegates deplored the drastic decline in elephant populations, condemning the prevalence of ivory poaching and illegal killing of elephants across all African elephant range States, driven by domestic ivory markets.

The Hon. Najib Balala, the Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Tourism & Wildlife and the host of the AEC Summit, congratulated the delegates for agreeing on the elephant range states' negotiating positions on elephant protection proposals for the Sri Lanka conference.

Hon. Balala said he believed that the international community has a historic opportunity to protect elephants for future generations. He commended countries that had taken bold actions since the CITES CoP17 meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2016, by introducing national restrictions on ivory trade. In particular, Hon Balala praised China as a stellar example, blazing the conservation trail by closing its ivory market. "We now need other international players to follow suit.

On behalf of the government of Kenya and the 32-member State Coalition, I express our collective gratitude to China for closing its domestic ivory market. In the spirit of solidarity, I call on all nations with ivory markets – the EU and Japan in particular – to close theirs, too. All legal ivory markets – whether in Asia or Europe - have a direct impact on illegal trade, poaching and wanton killing of elephants."

The Coalition, through its member States, has submitted a package of four proposals to CoP18 on re-listing of all African elephants in Appendix I, closure of all domestic ivory markets, management of ivory stockpiles and an end to the export of live elephants to zoos and other captive facilities.

Hon Balala congratulated the delegates on the *esprit de corps* on show at the Summit, as well as reaching the agreement on the numerous elephant conservation issues. He commended China, the US, Hong Kong, France, the UK, Luxembourg and Singapore for

announcing, or having already taken action to restrict ivory trade. He added: “Elephants are not only the national heritage of our respective range states, they are international symbols of global biodiversity. We need an international ban on ivory trade and call on the international community to support the AEC proposal to include all African elephants in Appendix I of CITES, which prohibits all ivory and other elephant trade.”

The AEC called for global solidarity in the protection of elephants. According to the Coalition, the very existence of ivory stockpiles sends a crystal clear message to poachers that ivory is desirable and has a commercial value. All countries with ivory stockpiles must ensure they don't leak into trade. If not, elephants will be extinct in the wild within a decade.

The Coalition also considered and agreed to support other proposals submitted by its members to CoP18 to strengthen the protection of the species.

END

Notes for journalists

The African Elephant Coalition is an alliance of 32 African countries majority of whom are range States for the African elephant and committed to the survival of the species, free from the threat of international ivory trade.

The AEC Secretariat is based in Nairobi, Kenya.

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Annex: List of the 32 Countries of the AEC with countries participating in 2019 Nairobi summit shown in asterix*

Benin*	Equatorial Guinea	Kenya*
Burkina Faso*	Eritrea*	Liberia*
Burundi	Ethiopia*	Mali*
Cameroon*	Gambia	Mauritania*
Central African Republic*	Gabon*	Niger*
Chad*	Ghana*	Nigeria*
Comoros*	Guinea	Republic of the Congo*
DR Congo *	Guinea-Bissau	Rwanda*
	Ivory Coast*	Senegal*

Sierra Leone*

Somali*

Sudan*

South Sudan*

Togo*

Uganda

