



The Honorable Yuriko Koike
Governor of Tokyo
Secretarial Section, General Affairs Division,
Office of the Governor for Policy Planning
Tokyo Metropolitan Government
8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku 2-chome
Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 163-8001
Japan

Re: Appeal to Tokyo to End the Trade of Elephant Ivory

Dear Governor Koike,

I am writing on behalf of the Council of the Elders of the African Elephant Coalition, a consortium of more than 30 African member States, to urge the jurisdiction of Tokyo to ban the trade of elephant ivory and appeal to you to recommend that the national government of Japan take urgent action to close its domestic ivory market.

We applaud the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's progressive development of an Advisory Committee, under your leadership, to examine the ivory trade within your jurisdiction and outline measures to prevent the illegal trade. Your progressive steps to tackle the ivory trade problem which are just beginning, already go beyond the promises of Japanese national government. Although the COVID-19 pandemic required a break in the Committee's schedule to focus on the serious global health crisis, and forced the unfortunate and complicated postponement of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we encourage you to continue your assessment and address the ivory trade problem as soon as possible.

The African Elephant Coalition represents the majority of African elephant range states and our advocacy to end the ivory trade is in line with the sentiments of scientists and the global public. Our mission is to protect "a healthy and viable elephant population free of threats from international ivory trade" through affording African elephants the highest level of international protections, including a commitment to close the ivory trade around the world.

As you know, there is growing international consensus against the ivory trade and countries around the world have closed their domestic ivory markets. At the 18th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), we called for the closure of all domestic ivory markets worldwide, with a specific appeal targeting Japan and the European Union, which is



currently working in this direction. Also at CoP18, member states which have not closed their domestic markets have been asked to report back on the measures they are taking to ensure their markets do not contribute to poaching or illegal trade, shifting the burden of proof to countries wishing to maintain their legal domestic ivory markets. Japan is expected to submit its report justifying and defending its open ivory market in June this year.

The domestic ivory trade in Japan undermines the international ban on the ivory trade and the closing of the markets in other countries. In May 2019, we expressed our concerns and appealed to Japan to study how to cooperate to combat illegal trade and requested Japan to close its domestic market.ⁱ Unfortunately, the existing ivory controls in Japan are ineffective in monitoring and controlling illegal domestic trade and preventing illegal exports. The prevention of transnational ivory trafficking is the responsibility of the entire international community, and in particular, we are concerned about the illegal exports of ivory from Japan to China, which closed its market effective 2018. Since then, at least 62 seizures of ivory from Japan have been made in China by Chinese authorities.ⁱⁱ

Taking strong and decisive action by banning the trade in elephant ivory will strengthen Tokyo's reputation on international conservation and send a decisive signal to the international community that Tokyo is choosing the survival of elephants over a destructive trade. While most of the world has taken shelter due to the COVID-19 pandemic, poaching has not. The absence of tourists and government anti-poaching patrols and the lack of incomes due to COVID-19 has led to an increase in poaching. Recently poachers killed six elephants in one day in Ethiopia, the largest slaughter of elephants in the country's history.ⁱⁱⁱ We are particularly saddened by this tragedy because Ethiopia is a member of the African Elephant Coalition. The ivory trade anywhere is a threat to elephants around the world.

We hope that Tokyo is able to close its ivory market, setting an international inspirational example, and leading Japan on a progressive conservation path.

Sincerely,

Col-Major Bourama NIAGATE

ⁱ <https://africanelephantjournal.com/council-of-elders-of-the-32-member-african-elephant-coalition-aec-calls-on-japan-to-close-its-ivory-market-and-support-elephant-protection/>

ⁱⁱ <https://eia-global.org/japansillegalivoryexports>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/02/six-elephants-killed-in-one-day-by-poachers-in-ethiopia>