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CITES 2004

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WWF FACTSHEET

13th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO CITES, BANGKOK, 2-14 OCTOBER 2004

AFRICAN ELEPHANT *Loxodonta africana*

I. Species Facts

Natural History and Distribution

There are two subspecies of the African elephant: the forest elephant (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*) and the savanna (or bush) elephant (*L. a. africana*). Genetic studies continue to investigate a recent suggestion that they may be distinct species. The African forest elephant is smaller than the savanna elephant, and lives in central and western Africa's equatorial forests. The savanna elephant is found throughout the grassy plains and bushlands of the continent.

The largest living terrestrial mammal (shoulder height to 290cm; weight to 7,500 kg), the African elephant is gregarious by nature, with a social structure organised around females and calves. In the savanna subspecies, each family unit usually contains about 10 individuals, although several family units may join together to form a 'clan' consisting of six to 70 members led by a large female. Forest elephants live in smaller family units. Small, temporary associations of males also exist; the members of such groups join and leave at will. Adult bulls are often seen with cow-calf groups.

Sexual maturity is reached at about 10 years in males and females, although males become sexually active much later. Unlike the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), both sexes carry tusks. Usually, a single calf is born after a gestation period of 22 months. Females can remain fertile until 55-60 years of age. Home ranges vary in size between 14 and 3,120 km², depending on food and water resources. A fully-grown African elephant eats up to 200kg of grass, leaves, roots, fruits, and bark every day.

The elephant's ivory tusks and prehensile trunk are its distinguishing features. Tusks are the animals' upper incisor teeth, which can grow to two or three metres long on old bulls. They are made of a unique mixture of dentine, cartilaginous material and calcium salts. Elephants use their tusks to pry bark off trees or dig for roots, and in social encounters as an instrument of display or as a weapon.



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Threats to the African elephant

Although it is difficult to assess accurately population numbers, it is thought there may have been three to five million African elephants in the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1970s and 1980s, the population declined significantly. It was hit particularly hard in the 1980s when an estimated 100,000 elephants were being killed per year and up to 80% of herds were lost in some regions. Most of this decline is believed to be the direct result of illegal and unsustainable offtake for trade in ivory, coupled with habitat loss due to human population pressure. Today, it is estimated that between 400,000 and 660,000 elephants survive in Africa.

While illegal trade in ivory has historically posed the greatest threat to African elephant populations, and remains a threat, since the 1989 ivory trade ban, concern about conserving elephants in many countries has centred around the reduction of their habitat due to expansion of human activities. Most elephant range extends outside protected areas: less than 20% of elephant habitat is afforded any protection. Human-elephant conflict typically occurs when farming activities take place within elephant range, as elephants raid fields for food and destroy crops. It is predicted that as human populations continue to grow throughout the elephants' range, habitat loss and degradation through activities such as logging and agriculture will become the major threats to the survival of the species, and human-elephant conflict will increase.

WWF has identified four issues that need to be addressed in order to conserve African elephants and diminish the factors that threaten them. They are: (i) to slow or stop the loss of natural habitat; (ii) to strengthen measures to control poaching, and regulation of domestic ivory markets, the driving force behind the continuing illegal international ivory trade; (iii) to reduce conflict between human and elephant populations; and (iv) to enhance the capacity of local wildlife authorities to conserve, manage and monitor elephants.

II. African elephants and CITES

Current status within CITES

Prior to CoP12:

In October 1989, the Parties to CITES transferred the African elephant from Appendix II (which allows international trade under a system of permits) to Appendix I (the highest level of protection - no international trade for commercial purposes). The Asian elephant had already been listed in Appendix I since 1975, when the treaty entered into force.

In June 1997 at the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES (CoP10) in Harare, Zimbabwe, proposals from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe for the transfer of their elephant populations from Appendix I to Appendix II were approved (with several annotations allowing trade in certain products and according to certain conditions only). In 1999, when a series of conditions had been met, the CITES Standing Committee approved a once-off experimental sale and export of specified weights of ivory from stocks of known, national origin in the countries concerned to a single buyer.

The sales occurred in April and May 1999. CoP10 also mandated the development and implementation of two long-term international monitoring systems to track trends in elephant poaching and illegal trade: MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) and ETIS (Elephant Trade Information System). ETIS is now established and returning analytical data, while MIKE is not yet fully operational across all of Africa and Asia.

In 2000 at CoP11 in Nairobi, Kenya, the South African population was transferred from Appendix I to Appendix II, also with annotations, but no further ivory sales were approved from any country. All other elephant populations in Africa and Asia remain on CITES Appendix I.



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At CoP12:

At CoP12 (Santiago, Chile, 2002), the Parties voted to allow changes to the annotations governing the inclusion of the populations of Botswana, Namibia and South Africa in Appendix II of the Convention, thereby allowing a future one-off sale of raw ivory. Certain conditions are required to be in place before the one-off sale will be permitted and these restrict, *inter alia*, the timing of the sale (*i.e.* it was not to take place before May 2004), the origin of the ivory, its size and volume, the eligibility of trading partners, and the use of revenue from the sale.

Botswana, Namibia and South Africa also requested amendments to the annotations that would allow annual exports of raw ivory – these were rejected, as were Zimbabwe's request for an initial sale of raw ivory and an additional annual export quota, and Botswana and Namibia's request to trade in worked ivory.

Several countries also proposed amendments to their annotations to allow trade in other elephant products. Botswana and Namibia's proposals to allow for trade in leather goods for non-commercial purposes and trade in elephant hides were adopted.

Other proposals included that from Kenya and India to return all elephant populations to Appendix I – this was withdrawn - while Zambia's proposal to transfer its elephant population to Appendix II was rejected.

At CoP12, ETIS returned its first analytical report which indicated that the continuing illicit trade in ivory is most directly correlated to the presence of large-scale, unregulated ivory markets and poor law enforcement efforts in a number of key Asian and African countries. The analysis also demonstrated that there has been an increase in ivory seizures since 1998, most likely due to an emerging market in China. As a result of the ETIS report, the African Range State Dialogue recommended that the CoP adopt formal mechanisms to address the issue of domestic ivory markets.

This resulted in the adoption of several decisions by the CoP (Decisions 12.36 to 12.39). Decision 12.36 calls on Parties, donors and organisations to provide financial support to strengthen the control of internal ivory trade (through public awareness activities, capacity building, law enforcement and improvements to control provisions). Decision 12.39 directs the Secretariat to undertake assessments of compliance with Resolution Conf. 10.10 (Rev CoP12) concerning trade in elephant specimens within the key countries identified by the ETIS analysis and to require an action plan from those that do not yet comply.

In addition to these decisions, the Parties also revised Resolution Conf. 10.10, thereby establishing an inter-sessional process for evaluating compliance of countries that allow internal trade in ivory, and strengthening requirements for the control of these markets. Other decisions adopted related to

- MIKE – calling on the Standing Committee to agree a definition of the “geographical scope and the nature of the data that constitute the baseline information from MIKE that must be provided before any exports can be approved” – Decision 12.33;
- Detrimental impact- directing the Standing Committee to determine how it would conclude that a detrimental impact on other elephant populations had occurred as a result of approved trade in ivory - Decision 12.34;
- Coordination of law enforcement – directing the Standing Committee to recommend measures for improving law enforcement coordination between ivory producing and ivory importing States – Decision 12.35.

Since Cop12:

At the 49th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC49) in March 2003, the Standing Committee adopted a definition of MIKE baseline information.

At SC50 (March 2004), it was agreed that

- at the African Elephant Range States Dialogue meeting (28-30 September 2004), a detailed workplan to address domestic ivory markets across the African continent would be developed, using the Secretariat's draft workplan as a basis (SC50 Doc. 21.1 (Rev.1);



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- the Secretariat would continue to implement Decision 12.39, paying particular attention to Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Djibouti, as well as Nigeria;
- the Secretariat would report to CoP13 on the implementation of Decision 12.39 and the outcomes of the dialogue meeting (as relates to domestic ivory markets); and
- the Secretariat would prepare a revised decision for consideration at CoP13 based on a holistic approach that covers all Appendix-I and –II elephant populations and their range States.

III. WWF African elephant projects

Financing and number of projects

- Between 1995 and 2001, WWF spent a total of US\$ 44,700,000 on supporting 61 projects in Africa directly related to elephant conservation. WWF is committed to working with range countries to support and assist their priorities for elephant conservation.

In addition, in 2000 WWF launched a new African Elephant Programme. Building on 40 years of experience in elephant conservation, WWF's new initiative aims to provide support for strategic field projects that address priority issues for African elephant conservation. In its first four years the programme provided an additional US\$ 1.4 million for eleven projects.

Examples of projects

The WWF African Elephant Programme has recently supported projects that survey and establish new protected areas (Cameroon, Mozambique), develop range state capacity to census and monitor elephants (central Africa), investigate domestic ivory markets (west Africa), and mitigate human-elephant conflict (5 range states). WWF projects also continue to provide technical and financial support for numerous protected areas that conserve key elephant populations across Africa (e.g. Comoé National Park in Côte d'Ivoire, Dzanga-Sangha Dense Forest Special Reserve in the Central African Republic, Tarangire National Park in Tanzania). WWF has also supported the development and implementation of both MIKE and ETIS, as well as providing support to the Secretariat's mission to Ethiopia concerning the control of its domestic ivory market.