

Report

Implementation of Thailand's National Ivory Action Plan during October 2016 – June 2017

Submitted to
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Thailand recognizes the need of continuity for combating illegal ivory trade. Thai Cabinet approved, on the 4th January 2017, to voluntarily extend Thailand's National Ivory Action Plan for another year ended on 30 September 2017. The implementation of Thailand's NIAP has still remained on 6 categories comprising: (1) Legislative reforms; (2) Management of the ivory database system; (3) Law enforcement; (4) Research and capacity building; (5) Public awareness; and (6) Monitoring and evaluation.

The significant progresses on Thailand's NIAP have been made during fiscal year 2017 starting from October 2017. The National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) had issued order number 60/2559 dated 28th September 2016 instructing relevant agencies to implement comprehensive measures to address illegal trade in elephants. Joint co-operation amongst 3 agencies including Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), Department of Livestock Development (DLD), and Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) had completed collection of blood and hair samples from 3,783 domesticated elephants for DNA testing. DNP is responsible of DNA analysis and the DNA result will be further recorded into the domesticated elephant database. This attempt aims to prevent laundering of wild-caught elephants into the domesticated population and to supports ivory trade control for identifying origin of suspicious ivory. The NCPO's order also requested relevant agencies to draft a legislation focusing on conservation and protection of Asian elephants. The elephant Act, therefore, was drafted and later disseminated for public hearing on 23rd May 2017. Thailand also puts effort on management of ivory database system by improvement of the system to enable effectiveness in operating a large amount of data. In fiscal year 2017, the budget has allocated for the system improvement which is under procurement process.

In related to law enforcement, comprehensive legislative and enforcement measures have been taken to control domestic trade in ivory. Ivory shops have been inspected on regular basis by officials of DNP and Royal Thai Police. In addition, DOPA has strictly inspected newly acquired ivory removed or trimmed from domesticated elephants and issued certificates of origin for the ivory weighting 482.96 kilograms in total. Thai Customs has employed risk assessment technique to identify ivory smuggling routes. Passengers travelling via the routes and their luggage have physically inspected. Postal parcels delivered from the high risk countries have also been inspected. Close collaboration amongst enforcement agencies led to six ivory seizures in 2017, details are as follows:

- 1) 5th March, 330 kgs of ivory transported from Malawi to Thailand;
- 2) 23rd May, 1.37 kgs of ten worked items delivered via postal package from Japan;
- 3) 22nd July, 37.1 kgs of ivory transited from Ethiopia via Thailand destined for Laos P.D.R.;

4) 22nd July, 36.8 kgs of ivory transited from Ethiopia via Thailand destined for Laos P.D.R. were seized;

5) 22nd August, 2.8 kgs of ivory pieces delivered via postal package.

6) 7th September 2017, 28 pieces of ivory weighing 41.09 kg from Congo to Thailand.

A Gambian was arrested by Thai Customs while collecting the packages of 330kg of ivory. As a result of continuing investigation and close collaboration between Thai Customs and Malawian Police, another offender was later arrested by the Malawian Police Services in connection with the seizure. To strengthen enforcement capacity, DNP organized 3 trainings on ivory trade control in March earlier this year at Ubon Ratchathani, Nakhon Si Thammarat and Bangkok.

Outreach, public awareness and education play a crucial role in controlling illegal ivory trade. Tourism entrepreneurs and tour guides were educated in related to ivory legislation during a seminar on 'Laws and regulations in relevant to tourism industry and tour guides' held by Department of Tourism. Public education activities at tourist attractions, trade hotspots, checkpoints and airports have been continually conducted nationwide. The information on ivory trade regulation and elephant conservation was disseminated via several activities including media trip and short film production competition on 'not to buy, not to sell ivory, help elephants, help the world. In addition to public awareness raising, in March 2017 WildAid Thailand united 15 prominent Thai business leaders with a pledge to never use ivory, and to urge stronger enforcement and more effective elephant conservation action. In September 2017, more than 100 Thai celebrities and some of the country's most influential personalities have joined WildAid and USAID Wildlife Asia's joint campaign called 'I am #IvoryFree' to deter the purchase of ivory in Thailand.

Besides implementation of Thailand's NIAP, in September 2017, Thailand hosted the 4th Regional Dialogue on Combating Trafficking of Wild Fauna and Flora is held in Bangkok. It was attended by delegates from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, and representatives from international organizations and non-government organizations. It discussed challenges, best practices on inter-agency cooperation, lessons learned, support needed and expertise they can offer, in combating wildlife trafficking, particularly as concerns, tigers, pangolins, ivory, rhino horn and rosewood, to identify areas of collaboration and capacity building, and develop next steps and commitments to multi-agency collaboration, especially on law enforcement, demand reduction, policy and legal reform, within and between countries and with support of international organizations.
