

CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES
OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA



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VIEW OF JAPAN REGARDING CONSERVATION
OF AFRICAN ELEPHANTS AND TRADE IN IVORY

This document has been submitted by Japan, in relation to agenda item 24 on *National ivory action plans process*, agenda item 27 on *Actions to combat wildlife trafficking* and agenda item 57.2 *Closure of domestic markets for elephant ivory*.

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View of Japan regarding Conservation of African Elephants and Trade in Ivory

1. Basic View

(1) As stated in CITES Resolution Conf. 8.3 (Rev. CoP13) on “Recognition of the benefits of trade in wildlife”, Japan recognizes that commercial trade may be beneficial to the conservation of species and ecosystems, and to the development of local people when carried out at levels that are not detrimental to the survival of the species in question. The same applies to trade in legally acquired ivory, and Japan is in the position that, it is desirable to realize such trade that would contribute to regional development while conserving African elephants as species, through establishing a strict control system that deters poaching or illegal trade by relevant states - including range states and consumer states - as well as international organizations.

(2) In Japan, an increase in significant smuggling cases or ivory demand itself has not been confirmed in recent years. It is not proper, therefore, to point out that an increase in the number or weight of whole tusks registered under the domestic trade system is linked to illegal trade or ivory demand.

2. Actual Situation

(1) Overview of Domestic System

A. Border Control

(i) Apart from limited exceptions (i.e. ivories of African elephants acquired before 1975, the year before the provisions of the Convention were applied to), import of whole tusks is prohibited.

(ii) Japan endeavors to keep effective border control through various measures such as limiting ports of entry where CITES specimens can be imported, allocating specialized officials to customs office located in those ports and establishing communication channels among the Ministries and Agencies concerned for real-time inquiries on specimens at border control.

B. Control of Domestic Trade

(i) Through amendment of a law on control of the domestic ivory trade in 2013 which strengthened the penalties for illegal trade and introduced control over advertisements, Japan endeavors to ensure appropriate control of domestic ivory trade.

(ii) In order to trade domestically whole tusks in Japan, each tusk must be registered under the above-mentioned law. Tusks subject to this registration are all tusks that exist in Japan. In other words, they are (1) whole tusks acquired before 1989 when international commercial trade of ivory was banned due to listing of African elephants in Annex I, or (2) whole tusks legally imported after 1990, which are mainly ivories imported by one-off sales conducted twice (in 1999 and 2009). All ivories imported by the two times one-off sale were registered just after their import into Japan. When registered whole tusks are acquired by ivory industry participants who are engaged in commercial trade (hereinafter referred to as “participants”), for example, manufacturers to cut into pieces for use and has no longer the whole tusk as such, the registration of the ivory must be erased. If the whole tusk is only for possession, registration of the tusk is not needed.

(iii) Ivories not in the form of whole tusk (i.e. cut pieces or worked ivories) is controlled through a registration system whereby participants have to report to the authorities to become able to engage in domestic commercial trade. All of these participants, such as manufacturers, wholesalers or retailers, must register a certain number of information such as their names, addresses and stockpiles to the authorities. Furthermore, they are obliged to submit to the authorities an inventory describing the contents of transactions.

(2) Situation of Domestic Trade (Market)

A. Trend of Ivory Demand

Stockpiles of ivory (cut pieces or worked ivories) have been 59,412kg · 47,546kg · 54,434kg and 55,005kg, respectively for fiscal year 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. In the meantime, the weight of whole tusks, which were once registered and then erased (these tusks are assumed to be used mainly as ivory products materials) were 10,345kg · 8,523kg · 7,732kg and 5,668kg, respectively for calendar year 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. It could thus be estimated that there is no increase in the weight of ivory products or domestic demand, taking into

account that the increase in the stockpiles and decrease in the weight of whole tusks of which registrations were erased have taken place at the same time.

B. Import/Export

(i) Import

Based on the calculation using data from CITES trade database, approximately 2,006 tons of whole tusks were imported between the year after Japan joined CITES and the year when international commercial trade of ivory was banned (1981 - 1989). On the other hand, only about 305 tons of whole tusks (including 89 tons imported by two times one-off sale) have been registered up until now in total since the registration system started in Japan (1995 – 2015), which is quite a small amount when compared with the total volume of whole tusks import (see Note).

(ii) Export

Ivories registered under the above-mentioned system for domestic trade are not automatically authorized to be exported. Only 17 pieces of whole ivory tusks have been exported from Japan with certificates issued based on CITES provisions within the period from 1990 to 2014.

3. Future Plan

Bearing in mind eradicating threat of poaching and illegal trade of elephants and conserving wildlife as a whole, Japan is determined to continue making its efforts in sincere implementation of the CITES at home.

(Note)

An increase in registered number and weight of whole tusks which is seen after 2011 could be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Increase in registration cases, driven by the possessors' will to voluntarily comply with the law, owing to the system being informed and known widely; and
2. Increase in cases in particular of inheritance and transfer of whole tusks that were imported legally in the past, due to the death or aging of their possessors.

Given the above, we do not think there exist any particular problems in the increase of registered number and weight of whole tusks in itself.