



Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

15 May 2018

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of the Elephant Protection Initiative Implementation Board to urge the Australian Government to close the domestic trade of elephant ivory in Australia.

Since its launch at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in February 2014, the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) has grown into the pre-eminent African-led, partnership-based and results-oriented elephant conservation initiative. The elected Implementation Board of senior African Government representatives is supported by its Secretariat and global partners, who work together to ensure the conservation of African elephants and their habitats. The EPI is made up of 18 member States who commit to meet the four aims of the EPI, one of which is the pledge to close domestic ivory markets where they continue to operate.

As you will be aware, Africa's elephants are in crisis. Elephant numbers have fallen to less than 500,000 and continue to decline each year; slaughtered by poachers to supply ivory, through organised criminal networks, to illegal markets. Elephant poaching drives corruption, undermines the rule of law, disrupts local economies and threatens social and political stability in some of the most vulnerable communities in Africa.

The continued legal trade in ivory, whether domestic or international, threatens the future of Africa's elephants by perpetuating demand and serving as a cover for illegal trade.

Significant progress has been made to end the international trade in ivory, with the closure of major domestic ivory markets, including China, the United States and most recently Hong Kong. Other countries in Africa and beyond have taken similar measures. The EPI has played an important role in working with the UK government to produce plans for a ban of ivory sales in the UK. In addition, the International Community adopted two important resolutions at the IUCN World Conservation Congress and Conference of the Parties to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), calling on governments to close their domestic ivory markets.

However, commercial trade in ivory products continues to be permitted within Australia. The EPI urges the Australian Government to follow the leads provided by the United States, China and the UK, and introduce, without delay, comprehensive measures to end the commercial trade in ivory and ivory products.

Thank you for your kind consideration. 2018 is a crucial year to create a sustainable future for the African elephant, a strong stance on this issue by Australia will play an important part. We look forward to your reply and stand ready to discuss this issue further with you at your convenience.

Best regards,

Kumara Wakjira

Chairman of the EPI Implementation Board
Director General of Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority