



African Elephant Summit Botswana 2-4 December 2013

Background

The Republic of Botswana has partnered with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to convene the African Elephant Summit, as called for in a [Resolution](#) adopted by the IUCN World Conservation Congress in 2012.

Elephant poaching and the illegal ivory trade are a major concern across Africa and beyond, with serious security (particularly in Central Africa); economic; political and ecological ramifications as these crimes increase in frequency and severity and expand into previously secure elephant populations. Criminal gangs and militias are using sophisticated military ware to kill elephants and take advantage of high-level corruption to move ivory across borders and off the continent. In some cases, the proceeds from illegal killing of elephants and the illegal ivory trade are used by criminal networks to undermine democratic rule in African states and to fund armed militias and rebel groups engaged in internal and cross border conflicts.

Elephants are an iconic species, whose well-documented ecological role in natural landscapes contributes to healthy ecosystems, supporting the water, energy and agricultural sectors in many African countries. As major tourist attractions, illegal killing of elephants reduces the ability of many African countries to harness ever-growing tourism business opportunities.

Governments at all points along the illegal ivory value chain, including African elephant range States, ivory transit States, and the States that are the major consumers of ivory, have expressed willingness to cooperate to address the current situation for African elephants.

The Government of Botswana and IUCN are working to ensure synergies with a variety of meetings and initiatives on wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade, and expect that a focus on African elephants will benefit broader efforts to combat illegal wildlife trade.

While the Government of Botswana and IUCN are aware that other initiatives are aiming to address various aspects of the illegal trade in ivory, including the [African Elephant Action Plan](#), Decisions and Resolutions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora ([CITES](#)) and national strategies, amongst others, we are convinced that, given the magnitude of the problem, and the fact that illegal trade is increasingly entrenched in organized crime networks, the African elephant crisis cannot be adequately addressed by the actions of environment ministries and wildlife authorities alone. Rather, government commitment at the highest level is required to secure viable elephant populations across the continent and to halt the illegal ivory trade at all points in the illegal ivory value chain.

Goal of the African Elephant Summit

To convene a high-level meeting in 2013 to secure commitment at the highest political level to take urgent measures along the illegal ivory value chain, by African elephant range States, ivory transit States, and the States that are the major consumers of ivory, to effectively protect elephants and significantly reduce in the illegal trade in ivory.

Objectives

More specifically, the Summit seeks to:

- raise awareness at the highest political level about the dimensions of the poaching crisis and the dynamics of the illegal ivory trade;
- commit to urgent actions to be taken to secure viable elephant populations across the continent and to halt the illegal trade;
- seek political, financial, and technical support in implementing these urgent actions.

Commitments

Outputs from the Summit will include:

- *An **emergency plan** outlining commitment to a targeted set of urgent measures by senior government representatives from range, transit and consumer States. This plan will draw on the existing African Elephant Action Plan, national strategies, as well as CITES Decisions and Resolutions emanating from CoP16. These commitments will include:*
 - Prioritising (urgent and country-specific) activities identified from the African Elephant Action Plan to address the recent upsurge in illegal killing across the range of the African elephant and in the global illegal ivory trade;
 - Tackling corrupt networks that support the illegal killing of elephants, and the trafficking of large amounts of illegal ivory currently in traffic;
 - Outlining clear timelines for strengthening national policy, legislation, law enforcement and deterrent penalties needed to control the illegal killing of African elephants and the illegal trade and trafficking in their ivory;
 - Recognition of the economic damage to communities and States represented by the widespread poaching of elephants;
 - Taking concrete steps to address national security risks resulting from the illegal killing of elephants where they exist; and
 - Securing increased funding pledges for elephant conservation and management, including law enforcement actions along the illegal ivory value chain.
- *A **declaration** supporting the emergency plan, signed by Heads of State and their Representatives.*

Context for these discussions will be provided by presentation of reliable technical information from IUCN, government participants and other key stakeholders.

Anticipated participants

- Heads of State, relevant Ministers and specialised technical staff of all African elephant range countries and all key transit and destination countries in the illegal African elephant ivory trade chain.
- Other institutions, agencies and organizations working on elephant conservation and the illegal ivory trade.
- Other key stakeholders and strategic partners.

Contacts

The African Elephant Summit is being hosted by the Republic of Botswana in partnership with IUCN. For further information, please contact the Summit Coordinator for IUCN (Diane Skinner – diane.skinner@iucn.org), or the Coordinator for Communications, Research and Development in the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (Mable Bolele - mbbolele@gov.bw). More information is also available at http://www.iucn.org/african_elephant_summit.