

Commission introduces new measures to fight poaching and to end trade in raw ivory

Today's decision, foreseen in the [EU Action Plan against wildlife trafficking](#), will help to prevent that legal ivory trade fuels international ivory trafficking, which has risen significantly over the last decade.

The European Commission will also grant new financial support of € 2.25 million to the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to help with the implementation of the decisions on international wildlife trade agreed at the [CITES Conference of Parties](#) in October 2016.

Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella said: *"Fighting international ivory trafficking is a battle we can't afford to lose. By ending the export of ivory tusks and other raw ivory we are living up to our responsibility. And we are delivering on the next commitment in our Action Plan against wildlife trafficking. Our financial support for developing countries will strengthen their capacity to implement the CITES Convention. This is essential to achieve progress in the fight against poaching and for sustainable wildlife trade."*

The legal export of old ivory items from the EU to Asia has risen since 2012 to a level where it could fuel the global demand for ivory and be used as a cover for illegal ivory trade. This is especially the case for ivory tusks, which represent the largest share of trafficked ivory. To address this problem, the Commission has adopted today's guidance document recommending that, as of 1 July 2017, EU Member States stop issuing export documents for raw ivory. In practical terms this means an end to the export of raw ivory, except for scientific and educational specimen. In addition, the guidance document, produced in close collaboration with Member States, sets out that the latter should interpret rules strictly when authorising other trade in ivory ensuring that the ivory items are of legal origin.

The EU has already very strict rules on ivory trade. Under these rules, ivory trade is banned, except for items acquired before 1990, when all African elephants obtained the maximum protection under CITES.

The adoption of guidance on ivory trade corresponds to a commitment taken by the EU and its Member States as part of the Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan adopted in 2016. It also responds to calls from the European Parliament and civil society. In the coming months, the Commission will gather data and consult with stakeholders and the public to see if further restrictions on ivory trade are necessary.

Background

Despite an international ivory ban, elephant poaching and ivory trafficking have reached record levels. It is estimated that between 20 000 and 30 000 African elephants are poached every year. Ivory seizures amount to more than 40 tonnes in 2015. The rising demand for ivory products in Asia is one of the main reasons for this surge in trafficking.

The EU has been a longstanding supporter of the CITES Convention, which regulates international trade in about 35 000 animal and plant species. Important decisions against wildlife trafficking were adopted by the 183 CITES Parties at their last meeting in October 2016. The 2.25 million € to be provided to the CITES Secretariat will help implementing these decisions. The money will be used to help CITES Parties ensure that international trade in endangered marine species (sharks, rays or eels) is legal and sustainable, to address concerns linked to fraudulent trade in animals bred in captivity and improve the capacity of developing countries to fulfil their obligations under the CITES Convention. These funds come in addition to many other programmes supported by the EU against wildlife trafficking, such as the Minimising the Illegal Killing of Elephants and other Endangered Species programme or the [UNODC-CITES Asia Wildlife Enforcement and Demand Management Project](#). The EU plans to step up its financial assistance and capacity-building support against wildlife trafficking in the coming months.

For More Information

[Memo on Ivory Trade](#)

[Guidance document](#)

[The Action Plan and the Staff Working Document](#)