

# WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN IVORY AND RHINO HORN

Commercial trade in ivory and rhino horn stimulates demand, increases poaching and illegal trade, and undermines enforcement efforts. Attempts at 'regulated' commercial ivory and rhino horn trade have never worked; instead, they have negatively impacted wild elephant and rhino populations, and trade proposals have consistently been rejected by CITES Parties in recognition of this.

Allowing legal trade in rhino horn or ivory from one country has serious repercussions for wild rhinos and elephants in all range States. Namibia's proposals to CoP20 to trade in rhino horn and ivory stockpiles threaten to reverse decades of global conservation, anti-poaching, and demand reduction progress.

**CITES CoP20 Proposals 9, 10, and 13 should be rejected.**

### Rhino Horn Trade, Poaching, and Trafficking

Prior to the CITES ban, legal trade in rhino horn fueled the decimation of Africa's rhinos.

After the ban was enacted, it took decades before all countries affected by rhino poaching and trafficking joined CITES; meanwhile, legal domestic rhino horn trade markets perpetuated demand, poaching, and thriving illegal trade.

Domestic market closures allowed rhino populations to stabilize and begin to recover in the mid-1990s.

Regulatory loopholes, new sources of demand, and poor enforcement precipitated a new rhino poaching crisis starting in the 2000s.

After nearly 20 years, significant progress has been made to reduce demand for rhino horn, improve enforcement, and curb poaching and illegal trade.

However, serious challenges remain, including insufficient international collaboration, rhino horn stockpiling, and corruption.

Allowing international trade in rhino horn would exacerbate existing challenges and undermine two decades of progress to protect rhinos from poaching and trafficking.

### Ivory Trade, Poaching, and Trafficking

Prior to the CITES ban, legal trade in ivory resulted in the decimation of African elephant populations.

The introduction of the international ivory ban in 1989 provided a recovery period.

However, one-off sales authorized in 1999 and 2008 resulted in a surge in demand and trafficking.

Legal ivory markets cannot be effectively regulated and provide an opportunity to launder illegal ivory into the market.

This creates an increased burden for enforcement in source, transit, and consumer countries.

The majority of legal ivory markets have been closed, including in former key consumer countries such as China, the EU, the UK, and the US.

Between 2010-2023, over \$3.63 billion was invested internationally to combat illegal wildlife trade.

Namibia's proposal to reopen international ivory trade would reverse decades of conservation gains.

# TIMELINES



# RHINOS

## 1900

An estimated 100,000 black rhinos can be found throughout Africa, while southern white rhinos are nearly extinct with only an estimated 50 animals left in iMfolozi Game Reserve in South Africa

## 1975

Sumatran, Javan, greater one-horned, and white rhinos included in Appendix I, and black rhinos included in Appendix II

## 1976

Black rhinos uplisted to Appendix I

## 1981

South Africa's proposal to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn is not adopted

## 1987

CoP6 adopts Resolution Conf. 6.10 which urged all Parties to cease international and domestic sales in rhino horn and to destroy all rhino horn stockpiles

## 1992

CoP8 rejects South Africa and Zimbabwe's proposals to downlist their white rhinos and black rhinos, respectively, to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn

Zimbabwe withdraws its proposal to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II

Taiwan bans the domestic trade in rhino horn

## 1993

The United States certifies China and Taiwan under the Pelly Amendment (US legislation) for undermining the effectiveness of CITES by driving demand in rhino horn and tiger bone, and imposes trade sanctions on Taiwan the following year

China bans the domestic trade in rhino horn

## 1994

CoP9 repeals Resolution Conf. 6.10 and replaces it with Resolution Conf. 9.14, which does not retain the provisions urging market closure and stockpile destruction

CoP9 adopts South Africa's proposal to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II with an annotation limiting trade to live animals and hunting trophies

## 1997

CoP10 rejects South Africa's proposal to fully downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn

## 2003

Organized wildlife trafficking networks begin to exploit trophy hunting loopholes in South Africa to export rhino horn for trade in illegal Asian markets, a process dubbed "pseudo-hunting"

## 2004

CoP13 adopts Swaziland's (now Eswatini) proposal to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II with an annotation limiting trade to live animals and hunting trophies

## 2012

South Africa strengthens hunting regulations and oversight of trophy exports

## 2010

Pseudo-hunting accounts for the majority of white rhino hunts in South Africa<sup>2</sup>

## 2006

Rhino poaching begins to increase in South Africa and Zimbabwe

## 2007

SC55 approves Japan and China as importing partners for second one-off ivory sale

At CoP14, conditions for trade in Annotation 2 amended to include a 9-year moratorium on ivory trade proposals

## 2008

Second one-off ivory sale takes place

## 2011

From 2011 - 2013, illegal killing of elephants and large-scale seizures of ivory rise, correlating with increasing black-market prices and illegal shipments destined for China<sup>3</sup>

## 2013

CITES Parties adopt the National Ivory Action Plan process to tackle the poaching and trafficking crisis

## 2014

Africa experiences its worst year on record for rhino poaching since the 1980s with more than 1,200 killed in South Africa alone

## 2016

CoP17 rejects Eswatini's proposal to fully downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn

## 2019

CoP18 rejects Eswatini's proposal to fully downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn

CoP19 rejects Namibia's proposal to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II with an annotation limiting trade to live animals and hunting trophies

## 2022

CoP19 rejects Eswatini's proposal to fully downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II to trade in rhino horn

Namibia's proposal (modified during CoP discussions) to downlist its white rhinos to Appendix II with an annotation limiting trade to live animals is adopted

## 2025

Namibia submits proposals to CoP20 to trade in white and black rhino horn

## 1989

CoP7 African Elephants uplisted to Appendix I

## 1976

CoP1 Asian elephants included in Appendix I, and African elephants added to Appendix II

## 1999

First one-off ivory sale takes place

## 2002

CoP12 South Africa's elephants downlisted to Appendix II. Second one-off sale approved (Decision 12.33)

## 1997

Resolution Conf. 10.10 on Trade in Elephant Specimens is adopted

African elephant populations of Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe downlisted to Appendix II, subject to Annotation 2

CoP10 authorizes the first one-off sale (Decision 10.1) of approximately 50 tonnes of ivory from Botswana and Namibia and Zimbabwe to Japan

## 2019

CoP18 rejects proposal by Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe to resume commercial ivory trade

## 2018

China's ivory ban comes into effect

UK announces closure of its domestic ivory market

## 2017

9-year moratorium on ivory trade proposals ends

## 2016

The US closes its domestic ivory market

CoP17 rejects Namibian and Zimbabwean proposals to achieve full Appendix II status for international ivory trade

CoP17 adopts stronger language in Resolution Conf. 10.10 to "close domestic markets... as a matter of urgency" in recognition of the role they play in stimulating demand, poaching and trafficking

## 2025

Namibia submits proposal to CoP20 to trade in government held stockpiles of ivory

## 2022

CoP19 rejects Zimbabwean proposal to allow ivory trade from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe

## 2021

European Commission adopts stricter measures to end most forms of EU ivory trade

# ELEPHANTS



<sup>1</sup> Rademeyer, J. 2016. Tipping Point: Transnational Organized Crime and the War on Rhino Poaching. Global Initiative on Transnational Organized Crime. Available at: <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/rhino-tipping-point/>  
<sup>2</sup> Id.  
<sup>3</sup> Wittemyer, G., Northrup, J.M., Blanc, J., Douglas-Hamilton, I., Omondi, P. and Burnham, K.P., 2014. Illegal killing for ivory drives global decline in African elephants. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111(36), pp.13117-13121. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25136107/>

# EIA urges Parties to REJECT the CoP20 proposals from Namibia to trade in white rhino horn, black rhino horn, and elephant ivory.

## Prop. 9: Trade in white rhino horn and hunting trophies from Namibia



This proposal seeks to amend the annotation for Namibia's population of southern white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) to allow for commercial trade in registered white rhino horn stockpiles – 6,450 kg in total – owned by private citizens and the government, as well as hunting trophies.



## Prop. 10: Trade in black rhino horn from Namibia

This proposal seeks to transfer Namibia's population of black rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis bicornis*) from Appendix I to Appendix II to allow for commercial trade in registered black rhino horn stockpiles – 4,610 kg in total – owned the government.



## Prop. 13: Trade in elephant ivory from Namibia

This proposal seeks to trade in registered stockpiles of African savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) ivory from Namibia – 44,840 kg in total.



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