

## The African Elephant Coalition

Proposals to relax the African elephant's protected status and to promote one-off sales of stockpiled ivory spell doom to the elephants within our lifetimes. Twenty-eight African countries have come together to harness information and coordinate action for shaping policy to ensure the elephants' future.

### Background

1. In 1979 there were an estimated 1.3 million African elephants. Today, it is estimated that fewer than 400,000 remain; some authorities estimate the number to be considerably lower. The loss of a million elephants has been due primarily to illegal killing to supply a demand for ivory.
2. In October 1989, at the seventh meeting of the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Conference of the Parties (CoP7), governments banned international trade in ivory with effect from January 1990.
3. The links between the ivory trade and the illegal killing of elephants are clear (see KEF Fact Sheet 02-2013, *The Ivory Trade and Elephant Poaching*). Unless action is taken based on good information and sound policy rooted in the precautionary principle, African elephants will be gone from most of their range within our lifetimes.

### The African Elephant Coalition

4. At CoP12 in 2002, Mali, Kenya and Republic of Congo joined forces in order to speak with one voice to highlight the plight of their rapidly disappearing elephants.
5. At CoP14 in 2007, the growing coalition of West, Central and East Africa states joined forces to support a Kenya-Mali proposal for a 20-year moratorium on the ivory trade. A compromise was reached with pro-trade Parties for a 9-year moratorium beginning 2008.
6. In February 2008, nineteen national representatives met in Mali to plan for implementation of CoP14 elephant Decisions. The Parties present agreed the 'Bamako Declaration' to formalise the 'African Elephant Coalition', declaring that:  
*The Coalition will strive to have a viable and healthy elephant population free of threats from international ivory trade. Parties to the coalition will also develop an elephant action plan that will encompass national and regional elephant strategies that promote non-consumptive use of elephants through development of ecotourism for the benefit of local communities.*
7. A follow-up meeting in June 2008 in Mombasa, Kenya, formally inaugurated the African Elephant Coalition (AEC) in order to promote and sustain a united front for the long-term conservation of Africa's elephants and their habitats.
8. In January 2010, the AEC convened in Brussels in order to expand its lobbying and strengthen its outreach to the European Parliament and Member States of the EU. The Coalition addressed sessions of the European Parliament, met with MEP's and Member States, and conferred with other groups including African, European and Caribbean Representatives.
9. The AEC today includes 26 of the 37 African elephant Range States. They are: Benin, **Burkina Faso**, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, **Democratic Republic of Congo**, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, **Kenya**, Liberia, **Mali**, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Togo and **Rwanda**. Mauritania and the Comoros are non-range state members.
10. The six originally-nominated AEC Executive (underlined in para. above) met in Rwanda in June 2009 to reaffirm the AEC commitment to stand firm and speak with one voice to protect the largest land mammal on Earth. There are five Executive members in 2013 (indicated in bold).
11. The composition of the AEC includes high-level government officials from national wildlife management authorities and technical and scientific representatives from civil society, with small secretariats in each member state. The Coalition is therefore a powerful lobbying voice at CITES meetings of the Conference of the Parties.
12. The Coalition is chaired by Burkina Faso, while the vice-chairmanship rests with Kenya. The Coalition has designated three regional focal points, currently Mali for West Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo for Central Africa and Rwanda for East Africa. Kenya hosts the secretariat.
13. At CoP15 in Doha, March 2010 the Coalition spearheaded an information and awareness campaign to assist policy makers take the best possible decisions on ivory trade. Specifically, the Coalition argued that the agreement on the 9 year "resting period" applied to all African elephant range states, emphasizing that the official documents with the limited moratorium did not reflect the "spirit" of the agreement.
14. The AEC met in Burkina Faso in September 2012. Twenty-five Range State members renewed their commitment to elephant conservation, in particular the main undertaking of the Bamako Declaration of 2008 (see para. 6 above) and identified urgent actions necessary to increase protection of their populations. The resultant Ouagadougou Memorandum of Understanding stressed in particular the need to work together to:
  - *Develop international strategies and actions concerning the conservation of African elephants and their habitats, and in particular address the need to eradicate illegal killing of African elephants, including advocating against any measures that would undermine the international ban on ivory trade;*
  - *Ensure that no measures are adopted by the international community that could further undermine the security of elephants in Africa;*
  - *Revitalize institutional capacity building within the Coalition member states and strengthen the sharing of experiences between states through the training of fauna managers and conservationists and any other contribution deemed necessary.*

15. The AEC declared that the Memorandum of Understanding would remain open for signature indefinitely and its provisions would be carried out by all signatory states represented by delegates designated and accredited for that purpose by the ministers responsible for matters of wildlife in each state.
16. Main activities of the Coalition include:
- (a) Establishment of an operational secretariat and sub-secretariats of the Coalition at the regional and sub-regional levels respectively;
  - (b) Follow-up of the implementation of CITES CoP Decisions on elephant conservation and ivory trade and particularly those Decisions directed to the Parties;
  - (c) Implementation of Decision 14.75, *Directed to African elephant Range States*, (Appendix 1) on resource mobilization, capacity building, development and implementation of Action Plans;
  - (d) Monitoring of both legal and illegal trade in ivory;
  - (e) Developing a common stand for the CITES CoPs based on new developments in ivory trade and elephant conservation and management;
  - (f) Organisation of exchange programs amongst the members to allow for sharing of experiences; this entails identification of resource countries within the Coalition from which the others can learn the different approaches to conservation management of the African elephant;
  - (g) Planning for capacity building training programs in an effort to strengthen the Coalition members on aspects of implementing CITES and other biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) while building synergies with CITES;
  - (h) Developing joint proposals and country positions on conservation and management of the African elephant for discussion during CITES meetings especially in the Standing Committee and CoP;
  - (i) Advising the Standing Committee members representing the sub-regions represented in the Coalition on matters relating to the conservation of the African elephant;
  - (j) Outreach and resource mobilization for conservation badly needed in the Coalition countries.

## The Kenya Elephant Forum

The Kenya Elephant Forum was established in 2007. It provides a participatory platform for gathering and disseminating information to guide the formulation and implementation of policy and action for African elephant conservation and management in the context of rational and sensitive co-existence of elephants and people in shared ecosystems. KEF's main functions include:

- Convening concerned and authoritative individuals and groups to develop policy-relevant information for decision-making at local, national and international levels;
- Giving elephant advocacy an authoritative voice worldwide;
- Providing support to the AEC through organizing and seeking support for priority actions;
- Identifying and catalysing priority actions for the sustained conservation of Kenya's elephant populations.

KEF core members comprise representatives from Amboseli Trust for Elephants (ATE), CONET, Conservation Kenya, Elephant Neighbors Center (ENC), ElephantVoices, the Gallman Foundation, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Maniago Safaris, Pan African Wildlife Conservation Network (PAWCN), Save The Elephants (STE), WildlifeDirect and Youth for Conservation (YfC).

Membership is open to individuals and organizations involved in elephant conservation and management programmes. Participation is both in individual and institutional capacity.

In support of the AEC and all government delegations to CITES who are concerned with the plight of elephants and the national and intergovernmental processes impinging on their survival, KEF is pleased to provide a series of Fact Sheets of which this is the first.

The other Fact Sheets are:

### 02 The Ivory Trade & Elephant Poaching

### 03 Cites and the Ivory Trade

### 04 Proposals on the African Elephant for CoP16

### 05 Elephants and Ecosystems

### 06 Action to Stop the Illegal Killing of Elephants

### 07 The CITES 'Decision Making Mechanism'



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Data sources available upon request