

Beat: Health

ELEPHANT WHITE GOLD TRADE IMPOSES URGENT INTERNATIONAL GREAT DEBATE

TRADE OR NO IVORY TRADE

PARIS - WASHINGTON DC, 01.09.2015, 20:23 Time

USPA NEWS - China is the world leader when it comes to the elephant ivory trade. Thailand is now considered second in line, while Japan, Europe and the United States are also implicated in trade. Escalating ivory prices and the rising of demand in China,...

China is the world leader when it comes to the elephant ivory trade. Thailand is now considered second in line, while Japan, Europe and the United States are also implicated in trade. Escalating ivory prices and the rising of demand in China, combined with an uncontrollable legal ivory market that provides cover for illegal trade, make a lethal combination that is discriminating wild elephant populations.

Should we legalize the ivory trade ?

Buying ivory in China and Japan is legal, but only if the ivory is bought according to the country's ivory product registration and certification system. In China, ivory bought in this way may only be bought by Chinese nationals and may not be traded outside the country. This system was developed in 2004 to meet the conditions required by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) for the purchase of stockpiled ivory from some African countries.

One aim of the one-off sale was to bring down the price of smuggled ivory, making it less profitable business. In fact, the opposite has happened, with the wholesale price of ivory in China, bought by carvers and processors, said to have increased from around US \$150 to US \$350 per kilogram in 2002 and 2004 respectively to an estimated US \$ 750 in 2010. Not only have legal ivory sales failed to reduce the price of ivory, they have failed to curb demand for ivory too.

In fact, the demand for ivory has soared since 2008, witnessed by an increasing number of seizures of large ivory shipments since 2007, and the declaration by traffic that 2011 was a "anus horribilis" for elephants. Over the past 10 years, elephant range countries in Africa have seen an escalation of elephant poaching, mainly to supply the ivory trade. Across much of the African continent, depleted elephant populations that had begun to recover from their low points of three decades ago are declining again. IFAW calls for any legal trade in ivory to be banned. Propagating the trade will see to the ever-increasing deaths of elephants across Africa.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-5103/elephant-white-gold-trade-imposes-urgent-international-great-debate.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Ruby BIRD (Journalist/Director/Photographer)

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619