

**Forum:** Environment Commission

**Issue:** Measures to combat international ivory trade

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**Position:** Chair

### Overview of the Issue

The ivory trade is the commercial, often illegal trade in the ivory tusks of the hippopotamus, walrus, narwhal, mammoth, and most commonly and most significantly, African and Asian elephants. <sup>[1]</sup> Elephants freely wandered various places throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. However, today they are labelled as an endangered species and the number of elephants that survive outside national parks and reserves is decreasing at a rapid rate. Africa had 1.3 million elephants in 1970. There are now only about 415,000 and their number is continuing to decline. <sup>[2]</sup> This is because of the persistent poaching and habitat loss that has been occurring over the past decades and in our present day due to the illegal international ivory trade. 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. <sup>[3]</sup>

The rising demand for ivory products in Asia is one of the main reasons for this surge in trafficking. The number of savannah elephants declined by 30% from 2007-2014, and forest elephants by 60% from 2002-2011; <sup>[4]</sup> these are scary statistics and at this rate, unless something is done about it, elephants will be driven to extinction in the not too distant future. While unrestricted international commercial trade in 'new' ivory is banned (CITES 1989), many countries continue to allow some form of commercial trade in ivory within and across their borders. Increasingly, these domestic markets are being recognised as significant drivers of elephant poaching and ivory trafficking.

The ivory trade is fuelling organized crime and insecurity as traffickers smuggle tusks through the same networks as other high value illegal goods. Ultimately the trade is driven by demand for ivory in consumer countries, mostly in the Far East, where it is sought after as a status symbol and an investment. Sophisticated criminal elements—often the same groups that smuggle guns, people, and drugs—orchestrate the poaching and smuggling of elephant tusks to foreign markets. Unknown amounts of poached ivory are believed to be exchanged against money, weapons and ammunition to support conflicts in several African countries.

Significant poaching incidents have recently occurred in Cameroon (Bouba N'Djida National Park), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Garamba National

Park) and the Central African Republic (Dzanga-Ndoki National Park). The CITES Secretariat has also informed its partners in the International Consortium on Combatting Wildlife Crime (ICWC) of the imminent threat to elephants in the Central African Republic (Dzanga-Ndoki National Park) and requested each one to reach out and inform their various networks.<sup>[5]</sup>

Poaching levels have increased in all African subregions, with central Africa continuing to display the highest levels of illegal killing in any subregion in Africa or Asia. Wildlife rangers who are serving in the front line are often quite literally being outgunned. Wildlife crime has become a serious threat to the security, political stability, economy, natural resources and cultural heritage of many countries. The extent of the response required to address this threat effectively is often beyond the sole remit of environmental or wildlife law enforcement agencies, or even of one country or region alone. The illicit profits of this ivory trade threaten not only the future of elephants, but also security in Africa and around the world.

Currently, various organizations such as WWF, The Born Free Foundation, TRAFFIC and others are working towards ensuring that the illegal trade of ivory is stopped completely. They are using various types of strategies such as ivory stockpile destruction, raising awareness of the issue and changing attitudes, working directly with other governments to ensure the eminent closure of their ivory markets and strengthening law enforcement strategies and various other methods. There are also organisations working to understand the underlying motivations of ivory buyers and develop strategies to influence them. Another major strategy that organizations such as the AWF are using is engaging the public to spread public awareness about the illegal ivory trade and the adverse effects it has on the safety and future of animals such as elephants, as well as humans, in hopes that it will influence people to reject ivory products and boycott that specific market.

**N.B: Despite the fact that elephants are in the most danger due to the illegal ivory trade, it must not be forgotten that there are other animals that are being poached and killed for their ivory and so the methods and strategies to tackle this issue must also include those animals.**

The international ivory trade is an issue that needs to be addressed immediately as this industry is growing by the day and causing a lot of damage to the world around us – socially, economically, politically and environmentally. There are methods and strategies in place to combat this issue but they are simply not enough and this issue requires further deliberation and discussion, leading to better and more refined methods and strategies.

## Key Terms

**Trafficking:** "The action of dealing or trading in something illegal." <sup>[6]</sup>

**Ivory:** "A hard creamy-white substance composing the main part of the tusks of an elephant, walrus, or narwhal, often (especially formerly) used to make ornaments and other things." <sup>[6]</sup>

**Poaching:** "Illegally hunt or catch (animals) on land that is not one's own or in contravention of official protection." [6]

**Endangered:** "A species seriously at risk of extinction." [6]

**CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora):** "is an international agreement between governments that aim to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival." [7]

**TRAFFIC (Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce):** "TRAFFIC, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network, is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on the trade of wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity and sustainable development." [8]

**AWF (African Wildlife Fund):** "is an international conservation organization that ensures wildlife and wildlands thrive in modern Africa." [9]

**WWF (World Wildlife Fund):** "is the world's leading conservation organisation that ensures that wildlife and wildlands thrive globally, through the delivery of innovative solutions that meet the needs of both people and nature." [10]

**EPI (Elephant Protection Initiative):** The EPI is a coalition of African countries with common policies on elephant conservation. The EPI countries are committed to:

1. Maintaining the 1989 International Ban on the Ivory Trade
2. Closing down domestic markets in ivory
3. Putting ivory stockpiles beyond economic use
4. Implementing the "African Elephant Action Plan" [11]

**The Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS):** ETIS is a comprehensive information system to track illegal trade in ivory and other elephant products. [12]

## Countries and Organizations Involved

**International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW):** The IFAW is deeply involved in the fight to stop the international ivory trade and has started a number of campaigns to help tackle the issue. In addition to supporting anti-poaching measures, IFAW addresses all the links in the ivory chain, from source to transit to consumption. IFAW conducts behaviour change communication campaigns in key consumer countries. Through public outreach, IFAW educates consumers about the cruelty, conservation impacts and illegality of wildlife trade. Nations around the world have seized tons of illegally trafficked ivory since a ban on

international trade of ivory went into effect in 1989. An increasing number of countries along the trade chain from elephant range states to ivory consumer nations have publicly destroyed their confiscated ivory stockpiles through burning and crushing. IFAW has participated in ivory destruction events in the US, UK, France, Belgium, mainland China and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China. Destruction of confiscated ivory tusks and trinkets serves a symbolic purpose: to bring attention to the fact that tens of thousands of elephants are being killed for their ivory each year. IFAW also believes that any legal sales from existing stockpiles will make it easier for illegal ivory to enter the market, and they campaign against any future stockpile sales. <sup>[13]</sup>

**The "Stop Ivory" organisation:** Stop Ivory is an independent non-government organisation which aims to protect elephants and stop the ivory trade by implementing the Elephant Protection Initiative with support from Conservation International. <sup>[14]</sup>

**Mozambique:** Mozambique is a country with a high level of poaching and illegal ivory trade, but it has taken strong measures to combat them, such as training for guards in protected areas, strengthening the role of the police and awareness-raising for the authorities in ports and airports in order to facilitate the seizure of ivory before it leaves for Asia. Mozambique has also strengthened cooperation between the judicial system and the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC), the authority responsible for managing Mozambique's protected areas, whose role in investigations related to illegal ivory trade has been recognized by the law since 2017. In this context, ANAC and the customs services have built up a strong relationship, which has allowed the seizure of several tons of ivory in recent months. For example, on 12 April this year, 3.5 tons of ivory from about 434 elephants were seized in the Port of Maputo. This ivory was about to leave for Cambodia. It is one of the biggest ever seizures of ivory. <sup>[2]</sup>

**China:** China has long been one of the world's biggest markets for ivory, but as of 2018 all trade in ivory and ivory products in the country is illegal. China's ivory trade ban has had positive effects in reducing ivory trade, since it came into effect at the end of 2017. However, more work must be done to tackle the trade, including urgent action to reduce ivory purchases from Chinese travellers visiting neighbouring countries. New research released by WWF and TRAFFIC has shown that intention to buy ivory in China has dropped by almost half to 26%, in comparison to 2017 before the ban was in place. <sup>[18]</sup> Alongside this, 9 out of 10 people asked in the consumer research said that they support the ivory ban in China. All pre-ban legal ivory shops visited by TRAFFIC in 2018 have stopped selling ivory and the scale of, illegal ivory trade in most surveyed cities and online platforms has decreased. Whilst the purchasing of ivory has reduced within China, there are still concerns of an illegal ivory trade within trafficking hotspots, particularly at the border with neighbouring Vietnam. The recent report also highlighted concerns over China's ivory auction market, which

remains the only legitimate post-ban commercial outlet for ivory sales. Examination of the current exemption allowing antique ivory to be sold at auction has revealed potential loopholes for laundering illegal ivory. 17 pre-auction exhibitions that were visited as part of the investigation revealed a lack of compliance with the need to obtain administrative approvals from relevant authorities, with seven of them in violation of laws and regulations related to elephant ivory auctions. This discovery led to 219 lots of elephant ivory items being withdrawn by law enforcement officers.

**Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya:** Collectively, these countries constitute the greatest illicit sources of ivory flowing out of Africa. These countries however are making strides in cracking down on the criminal syndicates but Tanzania remains the largest elephant poaching hotspot in the world, according to the results of the Great Elephant Census. <sup>[15]</sup>

**Vietnam:** Vietnam serves as a major transit country for ivory destined for China. A report by ETIS says there is new evidence suggesting that locally ivory is being found for sale in considerable quantities. Of particular concern are a series of villages in the vicinity of Hanoi that reportedly support a growing cross-border market in wildlife products with China with relative impunity. <sup>[15]</sup>

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong, which is regarded as separate to China, functions primarily as a transit intermediary for ivory destined for the Chinese mainland, but the territory also has one of the world's largest domestic ivory markets. There are widespread allegations that Hong Kong's domestic market is engaged in large-scale illegal ivory laundering. <sup>[15]</sup>

**USA:** The USA still has the second largest domestic ivory market behind China and is renowned as a hotbed for the laundering of illegal ivory from Africa. <sup>[15]</sup>

**UK:** A recent report by the convention on international trade in endangered species (Cites) suggested that between 2010 and 2015 Britain was the largest exporter of legal ivory in the world. A UK ban on ivory sales, which the government claims will be the toughest in Europe and one of the strictest in the world, is to be introduced after the proposals were overwhelmingly backed in a public consultation. The ban makes exemptions only for musical instruments containing a small percentage of ivory, some antiques, and museum objects. The environment secretary, Michael Gove, described the trade in ivory as "abhorrent" and said: "Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol, so we will introduce one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales to protect elephants for future generations." However, no date has yet been set for the introduction of the legislation. <sup>[17]</sup>

**Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe** - These countries have over the years managed to look after their elephants relatively well. These countries are sitting on large stock piles of ivory from elephants that have died

due to natural causes and have been knocking on the doors of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to be allowed controlled trade in ivory.

**Other countries involved:** South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia are major players in ivory poaching where the trade has been linked to funding terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab and Lord's Resistance Army. In Asia, Myanmar and Indonesia serve as transit highways into China but have somehow escaped notice while in Oceania both Australia and New Zealand have recently been implicated in the illicit trade. Despite recent moves to close it down, many countries in the European Union, such as Germany, Spain and Austria, have recently reported significant ivory seizures. <sup>[15]</sup>

### Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

**September 5, 2017:** "The United Nations adopted another resolution on tackling illegal wildlife trafficking, recognising CITES as the primary legal framework for regulation. The species mentioned in the resolution include rhino, elephant, turtles, sharks, parrots and trees like rosewood, agarwood and sandalwood, all of which are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The key areas that the resolution incorporates includes enhanced national legislation, stronger law enforcement, corruption counter measures, and demand reduction efforts." [Click here](#) to download the resolution

**July 15, 2015:** A UN General Assembly resolution addressing the question of *Tackling the Illicit Trafficking in Wildlife* was adopted in order to address the continuous collapse of Elephant and Rhino population in our world. [Click here](#) to download the resolution

**#WildForLife:** The United Nations, backed by A-list celebrities from across the globe, on Wednesday launched an unprecedented campaign against the illegal trade in wildlife, which is pushing species to the brink of extinction, robbing countries of their natural heritage and profiting international criminal networks. <sup>[16]</sup>

**UK Ivory Act 2018 (December 20, 2018):** The Act extends the elephant ivory ban to include hippos, walruses, and narwhals. The ban, which will go into effect in late 2019, has been described one of the "world's toughest" ivory bans and effectively bans the buying and selling of all available form of ivory in the UK. <sup>[1]</sup>

**Resolution Conf 10.10:** The CITES Parties, through Resolution Conf 10.10 have addressed the issue of *Trade in elephant specimens*. The resolution looks at key strategies that can be implemented to combat the issue of the illegal ivory trade. [Click here](#) to download the resolution



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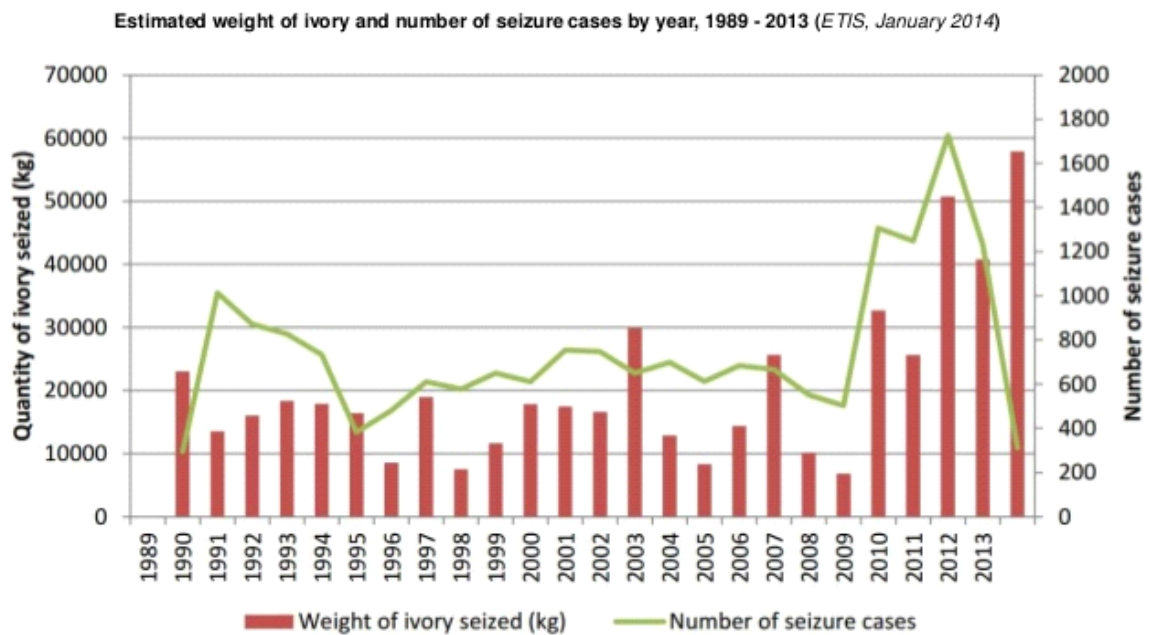
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## Appendix

**Appendix 1. Recorded numbers of the estimated weight of ivory and number of seizure cases by year, 1989 - 2013 (ETIS, January 2014) <sup>[19]</sup>**

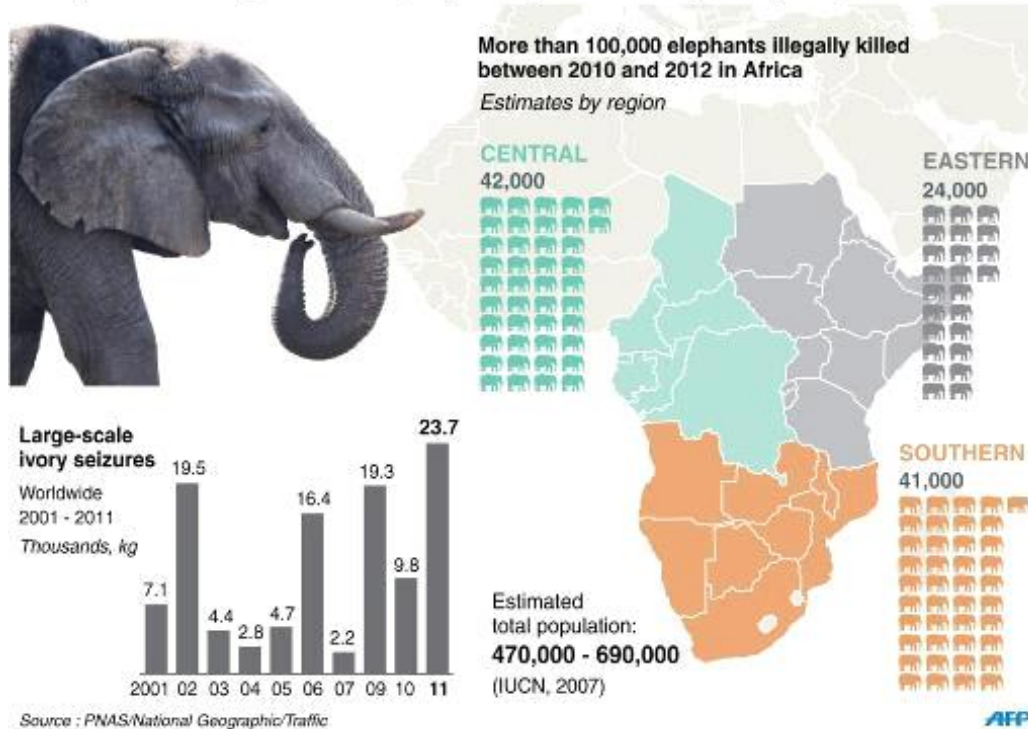
### ILLEGAL IVORY TRADE



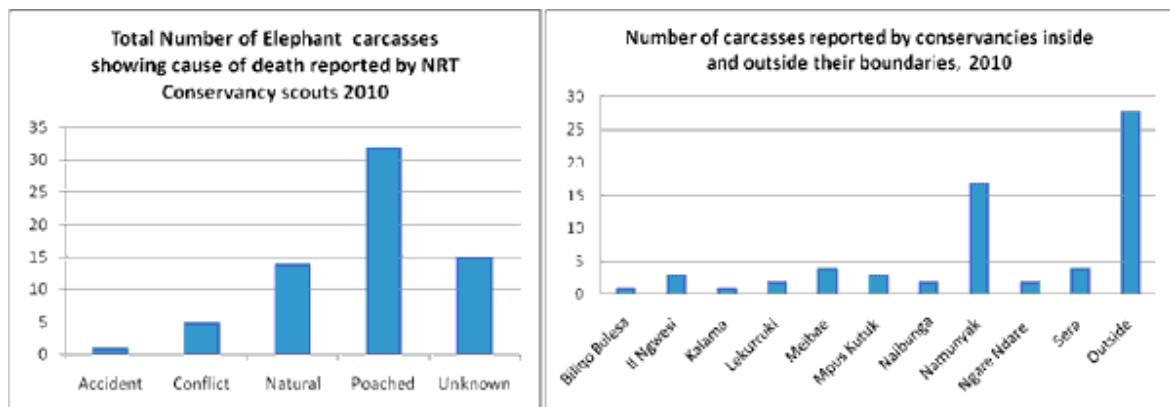
**Appendix 2. Poaching statistics between 2010 - 2013 <sup>[20]</sup>**

## Elephants slaughtered

A study released in August showed higher poaching statistics than previously thought

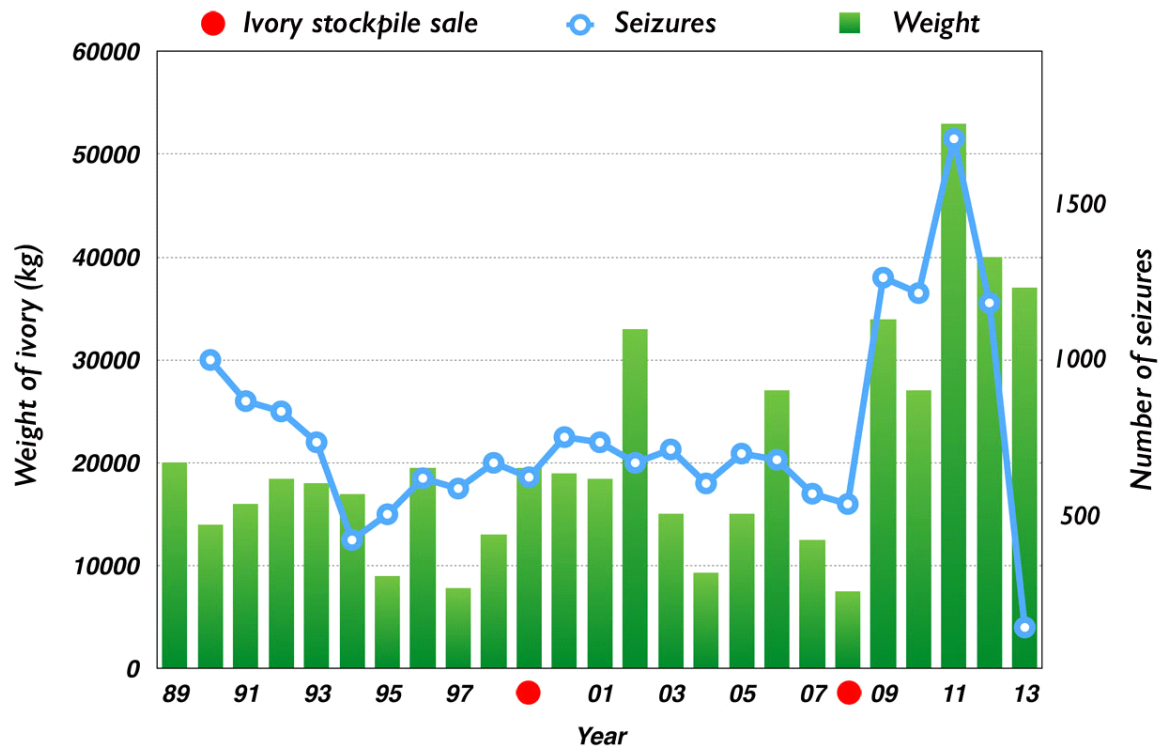


### Appendix 3. Recorded number of elephant carcasses reported (2010) [21]



### Appendix 4. Estimated weight of ivory and number of seizure cases (1989 - 2013) [22]

## Estimated weight of ivory and number of seizure cases



Source: CITES, IUCN/SSC African elephant specialist group, TRAFFIC International

*Appendix 5. The ivory trade in numbers* <sup>[23]</sup>

## The ivory trade in numbers

Selected facts and figures on the global ivory trade

On average one African elephant is killed by poachers every **25 minutes**.

The international trade in illegal ivory is estimated to be worth **£17bn** each year.

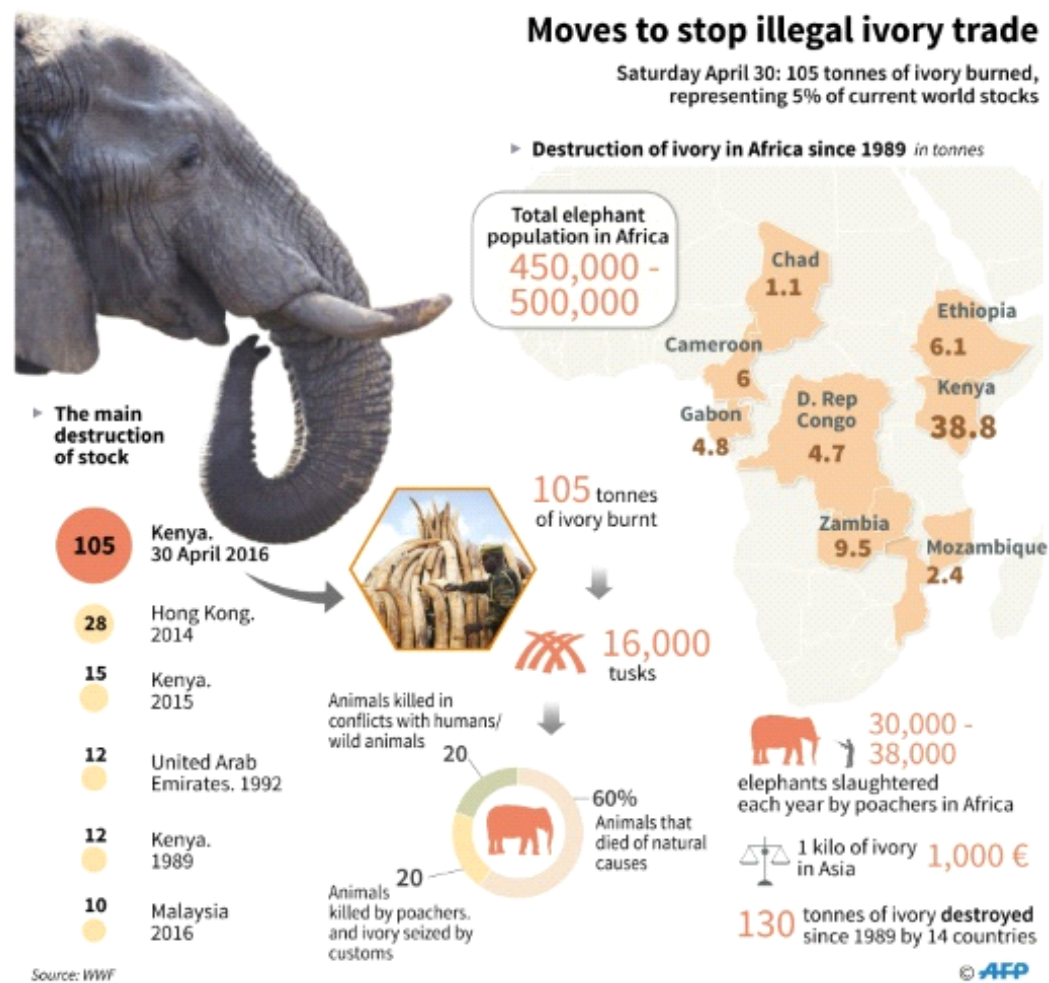
The overall African elephant population plummeted by more than **20%** between 2006 and 2015, falling to an estimated **415,000**.

In the four years up to 2014 the wholesale price of raw ivory in China tripled, reaching **\$2,100 per kilo**.

Between 1979 and 1989, **half** of all Africa's elephants were lost to the ivory trade

Sources: Save The Elephants, WWF, The Independent

## Appendix 6. Destruction of ivory in Africa since 1989 - 2016 in numbers <sup>[24]</sup>



Source: WWF



***Appendix 7. Destruction of elephant tusks in Africa [25]***



***Appendix 8. An elephant carcass, cause of death was poaching [26]***







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