



## IVORY STOCKPILES:

**PHILIPPINES:** On 21 June 2013, more than five tonnes of elephant tusks were destroyed by the Philippines Government. The ivory was part of a stockpile that had been collected over a 17-year period.

In the most recent Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) analysis, presented to Parties at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in March this year, the Philippines was among the nine countries and territories identified as being most heavily implicated in major illegal ivory trade flows. These nine are now required to submit action plans to improve their implementation of CITES ivory trade requirements. This obligation was directed at China and Thailand as end-use markets; Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong and Viet Nam as transit countries/territories; and Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as ivory source, transit or exit points in Africa.

**USA:** Authorities in the USA have announced their intention to destroy some six tonnes of raw and carved whole tusks seized by US agents over the last 25 years in a push to deter the illegal trade in elephant ivory. The initial date for the event was postponed.

[www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1266100/manila-destroys-us-10m-seized-ivory-send-message-prevent-theft](http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1266100/manila-destroys-us-10m-seized-ivory-send-message-prevent-theft); [www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-3-02-02.pdf](http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-3-02-02.pdf)

**ZIMBABWE:** In recent months, poachers in Zimbabwe have resorted to killing elephants with the use of poison. More than 90 elephants died in Hwange National Park after a water hole was deliberately contaminated with cyanide. Nine poachers were arrested after rangers tracked them to a cache of ivory hidden in the park. The chemical also resulted in the death of smaller animals and predators feeding on the elephant carcasses.

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24234927](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24234927), 25 September 2013; TRAFFIC

## ASIAN ELEPHANT LOANS FROM LAO PDR TO JAPAN

The Asian Elephant is included in Appendix I of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and trade is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Lao PDR became a Party to CITES in 2004. Formerly known as Lan Xang, the land of a million elephants, Lao PDR now has a small remaining population of perhaps 1000 elephants, half of which live in the wild and the remainder in captivity (IUCN, 2012). In recent years it has become clear that Lao PDR plays a much larger role in the trade in ivory and elephant parts than previously thought, acting in part as a gateway into China (Nijman and Shepherd, 2012).

In June 2012, it was announced that six Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus* from Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) were to be loaned to Tohoku Safari Park (Fukushima Prefecture), Iwate Safari (Iwate Prefecture), and World Monkey Park (Tochigi Prefecture), Japan, for a period of three years to support areas devastated by the 2011 tsunami (Anon., 2012). Known as "Japan-Lao Goodwill Elephants", the pachyderms arrived in July 2012. Reportedly the elephants are privately-owned but it is unclear if the animals were wild-caught or born in captivity.

CITES allows the loan of Appendix I species to circuses or travelling exhibitions provided the transactions are non-commercial and that none is exported pursuant to the criteria in Article III, paragraph 3 (which would require Lao PDR to declare a non-detriment finding), but similar exchanges of Asian Elephants have been heavily criticized in the past as being detrimental to the species (Hedges *et al.*, 2006). The loan is one of a series and after Thailand, Lao PDR now has the largest number of outstanding inter-country elephant loans. In 2000, 2003 and 2008, a total of 22 elephants (10 wild-caught, 12 captive-bred) were loaned to South Korean zoos, and in 2009, two individuals (origin unknown) were loaned to Pyongyang Zoo, North Korea. Another 12 Laotian captive-bred elephants were sent on loan by Thailand to South Korean zoos in 2001 and 2008. None of these elephants seems to have been returned to Lao PDR. In addition to these loans, since 2000 Lao PDR has exported 26 elephants to international zoos: two wild-caught individuals to Greece, 10 wild-caught and two captive-bred individuals to Kazakhstan, and 12 captive-bred individuals to China (CITES, 2013).

It should be noted that the reliability of the records in the CITES database is entirely dependent on Parties' accuracy in reporting these data. As well as discrepancies between officially reported import and export figures and the actual import or export figures (Blundell and Mascia, 2005; Nijman and Shepherd, 2010; Chen *et al.*, 2009), significant numbers of individuals declared as captive-bred are in fact wild-caught (Nijman, 2010). Prior to export, the Scientific Authorities of both importing and exporting Parties must provide assurance that the export is not detrimental to the survival of the species. The export of some 68 elephants from Lao PDR over a relatively short time period may suggest that this is detrimental to a wild population of possibly only 500 specimens, and calls for prudence in allowing any further exchanges.

The revision of *Resolution Conf. 10.10 Trade in elephant specimens* at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties included insertion of a recommendation that "all elephant range States have in place legislative, regulatory, enforcement, or other measures to prevent illegal trade in live elephants". Trade in live Asian Elephants is likely to become an issue at future meetings of the CITES Standing Committee.

## References

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