

COP 12 CONSERVATION TRIBUNAL

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African Countries Agree on Ivory Sales

A States Dialogue meeting in Chile ahead of the CITES COP 12 gathering yielded an agreement by South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Botswana to permit the strictly regulated trade in ivory.

While Kenya, predictably, did not join the consensus, a unified African position now exists in Santiago. Under the agreement, 70 tonnes of ivory from existing stockpiles will be sold in a single export. This ivory was legally obtained from natural mortality of elephants and from official management actions.

After May 2004, a majority at a meeting of African elephant range states can authorize annual quotas, but only after feedback is received from monitoring systems. Income from ivory sales will be used to finance elephant conservation programs and benefit local communities, a policy strongly advocated by IWMC.

Sales have been set at 30,000 kg for South Africa, 20,000 kg for Botswana, and 10,000 kg each for Namibia and Zimbabwe.

The agreement is a major victory for common sense and will test the sincerity of animal rights groups like IFAW who claim in their CITES publicity material that: "In each region where we work, IFAW's activities are informed by local customs and culture and tailored to the particular economic and political conditions of that area."

IFAW and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) have been at the forefront of efforts to prohibit all ivory sales to anyone other than themselves. HSUS had been secretly negotiating with South African officials to purchase ivory stocks, intending to burn them and thus waste a valuable resource. □

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Yes, It's a Business

The business of raising cash by promoting animal rights and welfare issues is on full display in Chile this week. Some may find such in-your-face commercialism vulgar, given that CITES COP12 is not, after all, a major sporting event.

IFAW, the fundamentalist animal rights campaign group, now appears to be the official sponsor of CITES, with its logo emblazoned on the ubiquitous conference bag, as well as on local street signs and posters.

This is rather like the National Rifle Association sponsoring an anti-gun rally. IFAW has no interest in protecting endangered species and no interest in trade. It advocates protecting all species, by prohibiting or restricting trade, irrespective of abundance.

The gold standard for IFAW is the potential public appeal of species, with obscure insects for example, playing second fiddle to elephants and whales that no longer need "saving" from man. All of which is confirmed by IFAW's

propaganda, contained in the CITES pack, which innocently proclaims its 200 campaigners, lawyers, lobbyists and "scientists" – terms that say volumes about the organization's modus operandi and little about actual conservation.

The sponsorship deal unfortunately suggests an association between the CITES Secretariat and the prohibitionists, creating the false impression of institutional support for the fundamentalist position of animal rights organizations. In fact, ICUN has twice rejected IFAW's application for membership, on the basis of its animal rights status.

IFAW will claim that its partnership with CITES demonstrates the authority of its agenda, disguised as it is in glossy brochures and attractive web designs. It will also doubtless use the association with CITES as a marketing tool to raise more money.

As the beautiful Andes appear suspended in the sky outside Santiago, IFAW appears to be sitting uncomfortably close to Zeus in Olympus. □

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Judging Elephant Data

Animal rights and welfare NGOs warn of problems with monitoring illegal trade in ivory. This, they say, is the primary reason why African countries should be prevented from putting into practice the agreement reached at the State Dialogue meeting last week, to sell ivory stocks according to strict regulation.

The campaigners argue that despite the MIKE and ETIS initiatives by CITES, data on poaching is inadequate, unreliable or in some way deficient. This argument has uncanny parallels with that deployed against whalers, where each population assessment is supplanted by another, seemingly in perpetuity.

Doubtless campaigners will continue to present this angle, whatever conclusions are drawn from MIKE and ETIS, as it is in their interests to demand certainty in an area where it cannot exist. Once ivory is being traded in a carefully controlled manner, they will have lost an issue that has proved to be a lucrative source of income for them for many years.

And, of course, it is exceedingly easy to instill uncertainty into any complex process. The NGOs have been known to do this themselves, creating precisely the type of problems that they argue must be overcome before there can be any trade in ivory.

In 1998, the CITES Secretariat received information from the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) giving details of alleged illegal trades of ivory. According to HSUS, 17 tonnes of ivory from the President's personal stockpile had been shipped from Namibia to Taiwan and 8.1 tonnes had been sent from Zimbabwe to China on an Angolan-owned aircraft. Both alleged transactions were said to be exchanges for armaments.

CITES investigated the claims thoroughly and found no evidence that they were true. China's military, defense industry, foreign affairs, public security, customs, aviation and CITES authorities all conducted inquiries and concluded that no Angolan-owned aircraft had entered China at the time in question and no exchanges of armaments for ivory had taken place.

Namibia responded that the allegations were untrue, that its President did not have an ivory stockpile and that the country had no communications with Taiwan. It welcomed a CITES inspection of its ivory stocks.

Zimbabwe also found no record of any international movement or unlawful sale of ivory, which was subsequently confirmed by an independent audit.

The CITES Secretariat wrote to HSUS requesting details about the source of its allegations. It offered the assurance that this type of information would be treated in complete confidence. Alternatively, it could pass on the relevant information to an official national law enforcement agency. HSUS declined and the Secretariat concluded that the allegations were unfounded.

The tactics of animal rights groups are evident to all. On the one hand they complain about a lack of reliable data, while on the other they are busy creating the uncertainties they profess to deplore. Countries acting as adjudicators in Santiago on the question of ivory trade should draw a level of confidence from the MIKE process that far outweighs any platitudes about imperfect data.

Ultimately, a judgment has to be made whether the information about ivory poaching, together with the regulatory measures put in place, are sufficiently reliable to justify a carefully limited ivory trade. IWMC believes the case for ivory trade has been made clearly and decisively. □

Juzgando la información sobre el elefante

Las ONG sobre los derechos y bienestar de los animales alertan sobre los problemas relativos a la vigilancia del comercio de marfil. Argumentan que esta es la razón principal por la que los países africanos no deberían vender las existencias de marfil a través de la reglamentación estricta acordada durante la reunión del Diálogo una semana atrás.

Agregan que, a pesar de las iniciativas del MIKE y ETIS de la CITES, los datos sobre la caza furtiva son inadecuados, no confiables o de algún modo deficientes. Este argumento posee temerosos paralelismos con aquellos utilizados contra los balleneros, donde cada evaluación de poblaciones es remplazado por otro, y así al infinito.

Algunos operadores continuarán presentando este perfil, más allá de las conclusiones obtenidas a partir del MIKE y ETIS, ya que les conviene pedir certidumbre en áreas donde jamás podrían existir. Una vez que se logre el comercio cuidadosamente controlado de marfil, habrán perdido una fuente de ingresos muy lucrativa por muchos años.

Además, es muy fácil generar incertidumbre dentro de cualquier proceso complejo. Se sabe que estas ONG generan ellas mismas los problemas que luego piden sean resueltos antes de renudar cualquier comercio de marfil.

En 1998, la Secretaría CITES recibió información de la *Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)* con detalles acerca de un presunto comercio ilegal de marfil. De acuerdo a la HSUS, 17 toneladas de marfil propiedad del presidente de Namibia fueron transportadas a Taiwan y 8,1 toneladas desde Zimbabwe a China en una aeronave Angoleña. Se dijo que ambas estaban relacionadas con el tráfico de armas.

La Secretaría CITES investigó minuciosamente estos reclamos y no encontró evidencias. Los

militares, industria armamentista, relaciones exteriores, seguridad, aduanas, fuerza aérea y autoridad CITES investigaron y concluyeron que ningún avión angoleño entró en territorio chino ni hubo transacción alguna de marfil durante el período en cuestión.

Namibia respondió que estas presunciones eran falsas, que el presidente no posee ningún stock de marfil y que el país no tiene relaciones con Taiwan. Además, invitó a la Secretaría a realizar una inspección cuando lo desee.

Zimbabwe no encontró en sus registros evidencia alguna de movimiento internacional o ilegal de marfil, confirmado luego por una auditoría independiente.

La Secretaría escribió a la HSUS solicitando detalles sobre la fuente de tales presunciones y aseguró que la información sería tratada confidencialmente. La información más relevante sería pasada directamente a un organismo nacional de seguridad. La HSUS se retractó y la Secretaría concluyó que las presunciones eran infundadas.

Las tácticas de estos grupos son evidentes. Por una parte se quejan de la falta de datos fundamentados, mientras que por otro lado se ocupan de generar incertidumbre con datos infundados. Las Partes adjudicatarias de la cuestión del comercio de marfil deberían darle mayor importancia al proceso del MIKE, el que tiene mucho mayor peso que cualquier dato infundado.

Debemos juzgar ahora si la información sobre el comercio ilegal de marfil, junto con las medidas regulatorias puestas en vigor, son lo suficientemente confiables como para comenzar un comercio limitado de marfil. IWMC cree que el tema del comercio de marfil ha sido planteado de manera clara y decisiva. □