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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Ivory Decision Condemned**

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**Bangkok, 12 October 2004:** IWMC, the world's leading advocate of the sustainable use of wildlife, condemned today's decision by CITES rejecting limited trade in elephant products from Namibia.

Jaques Berney, Executive Vice-President and Deputy Secretary-General of CITES for more than twenty years, said: "The case in favor of this trade was clear. It would have aided elephant conservation, help local communities and complement existing management programs. Unfortunately, CITES has sent a negative signal to poor rural communities in Namibia, who are now being told that they must wait for the completion of bureaucratic processes outside their control before they can use their limited resources to support their families."

IWMC had particularly expressed the importance of trade in jewelry products containing ivory – called 'ekipas'. A strictly controlled ivory carving industry, based on the traditional ekipas and using ivory only obtained from natural and management mortalities, would greatly improve the welfare of people living in poor communities in Namibia. Exports of ekipas would create employment and maintain the local traditions and skills of the Owambo tribe in northern Namibia, whilst also maximizing the value of ivory stockpiles.

The managed trade in ivory provides funding for conservation programs and, by placing a productive value on elephants, ensures that they continue to be protected as positive assets in the local economies. All revenue from the legal trade in ivory is reinvested in conservation through the Game Products Trust Fund of Namibia.

Regulations already exist in Namibia to control the possession, manufacture and sale of ivory products and the country also has one of the strictest trade control systems to prevent ivory from other countries entering its exports.

"This decision is a serious setback for the local and traditional people of Namibia", concluded Mr. Berney.

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The IWMC World Conservation Trust is an international organization that promotes the Sustainable Use as a conservation mechanism, the protection of the sovereign rights of independent nations and the respect of diverse cultures and traditions. It is a non-profit body supported by donations.

Eugene Lapointe is President and Founder of IWMC World Conservation Trust  
Former Secretary General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna  
and Flora (CITES) from 1982 to 1990

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