

**After CITES SC74 (7 – 11 March 2022):
IWMC's challenge to the prohibition lobby**

The 74th meeting of the CITES Standing Committee in Lyon, France, confirmed that CITES has been corrupted by prohibitionists committed to subverting its purpose. SC74 went off-piste by demanding, for example, bans on the domestic ivory and rhino horn markets, as well as, without authority, expertise or evidence, leveraging the COVID-19 pandemic to clamp down on the movement and management of wild animals.

The prohibitionists say that the only way to combat illegal trade in wildlife is to ban the legal one because the latter generates consumer demand that is satisfied by poachers and other criminals. This circular argument is rooted in faith and ideology rather than scientific and empirical evidence. It is an outlook that sees the exploitation of wild animals for human gain as morally wrong because, as Born Free says, 'every wild animal deserves to be able to live a life in freedom, with their own kind, and on their own terms.'

But this faith-driven prohibitionist viewpoint is incompatible with CITES' founding principles, which took the efficacy of the wildlife trade for granted until proven otherwise. But to be certain that IWMC's critique of the prohibition camp is justified, we are issuing a challenge to the NGOs and other actors who ruled the roost at SC74. Please, we beg them, answer the following ten questions:

- 1. How exactly does Japan's domestic ivory market, which utilizes 244 tonnes of stockpiled ivory, contribute to the slaughter of elephants by poachers? Where's the evidence?**
- 2. How would closing domestic rhino horn markets make the conservation of rhino financially viable and sustainable?**
- 3. How would banning the elephant ivory and rhino horn trades and trophy hunting help countries troubled by human wildlife conflict to win over local people to the conservation cause?**
- 4. Which of the Convention's provisions gives it the legal authority to 'direct' Japan to close its domestic ivory market and or 'direct' Botswana to close its domestic rhino horn market?**
- 5. Given that scientists have found no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 has a zoonotic origin, what does CITES have to contribute to either combating Covid-19 or to preventing future pandemics? If NGOs**

possess evidence as to how CITES could have prevented previous zoonotic diseases, we need to see it.

6. Where in the Convention is it said that under its auspices Parties are empowered to take responsibility for protecting human health?
7. Why do prohibitionists refuse to respect or enforce Resolution Conf. 16.6, which states that: “The implementation of CITES is better achieved with the engagement of rural communities”? Because at SC74 IWMC was told repeatedly that the Convention *does not* provide grounds for involving communities in its decision-making processes.
8. What motivated WWF to advise the United States to prepare a discussion document to discuss the ‘failures of Regional Fishery Management Organisations to manage Appendix-II shark species’? Is this anything but a prejudice looking for a justification?
9. Given how EMS Foundation (South Africa) abused the purpose of SC74 to lobby, without sparking controversy, the United States to ‘seek a prohibition of all wildlife trade`, is this the ‘New Normal’?
10. The history of alcohol, drugs, prostitution, gambling, arms and tobacco demonstrates that their prohibition made illegal trade riskier, more profitable and sought-after, while taking away the framework and supervision required to manage things responsibly. What makes you believe that the trade in wildlife is the exception to the rule?

The onus is on NGOs and their supporters – be they Parties to CITES or not – to answer these questions because the burden of proof rests with them. What is intolerable is to continue to allow the core purpose of CITES to be subverted by ideologues without evidence.