

# Hong Kong mulls following China to destroy ivory stockpile

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A worker throws a piece of ivory into a machine to be crushed during a public event in Dongguan, south China's Guangdong province on January 6, 2014

Hong Kong's government is considering destroying its stockpile of over 30 tonnes of ivory obtained through seizures of elephant tusks, it said Wednesday.

The Chinese government crushed a pile of [ivory](#) weighing more than six

tonnes on Monday, its first public destruction of ivory, to discourage illegal trade.

"The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department is aware of the steps taken in other places to destroy forfeited ivory," the Hong Kong government department said in a statement sent to AFP Wednesday.

The department said it is "reviewing the effectiveness of the existing disposal measures" and drafting a proposal for the destruction of forfeited ivory.

Hong Kong has been a transit point for the ivory elephant tusk trade. The southern Chinese city has seen tusk seizures rise steadily since 2009, reaching a record amount of 8,041 kilogrammes seized in 2013.

Having seized 33.37 tonnes of tusks since 2003, mostly shipped from African nations by sea, some of the stockpile has been used for educating school children on the harmfulness of the trade. But conservation groups have lobbied for the stockpile to be completely destroyed.

"I think they're going to do it because China has done it, the US has done it, it's a trend now, that's the way it seems to be moving forward," Hong Kong for Elephants campaigner Alex Hofford told AFP.



Ivory is displayed before being crushed during a public event in Dongguan, south China's Guangdong province on January 6, 2014

"It will send a very strong signal to consumers in China that buying ivory is wrong," Hofford said, adding that mainland tourists in Hong Kong are the ones buoying up the [ivory trade](#) in the city.

Surging demand for ivory in Asia is behind an ever-mounting death toll of African elephants, conservationists have said.

Experts believe that most illegal ivory is headed to China—where products made from the material have long been seen as status symbols.

Another endangered animals activist Sharon Kwok said that destroying the stockpile will signify to mainland consumers that buying ivory is no longer viable.

"They would be running scared and looking for something else to do," Kwok told AFP.

The US crushed six tonnes of ivory in November while the Philippines destroyed five tonnes of tusks in June, and Kenya set fire to a pile weighing the same amount in 2011.

Ivory trading was banned in 1989 under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), an international agreement between governments, but as poaching has continued the environmental group WWF estimates there could be as few as 470,000 African elephants left.

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