

Britain announces plan to ban antique ivory trade

October 6 2017, by Dario Thuburn



Protestors demonstrate in London against the ivory trade on February 6, 2017

Britain on Friday outlined plans for a near-total ban on trade in antique ivory, bowing to pressure from campaigners who say that poachers are exploiting loopholes in the current regulations.

Announcing the plan, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said the decline in elephant populations fuelled by poaching for their tusks

"shames our generation."

"Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol—so we want to ban its sale," Gove said in a statement.

"These plans will put the UK front and centre of global efforts to end the insidious trade in [ivory](#)."

Britain currently bans sales of raw ivory but allows trade in carved items produced before 1947, and campaigners warn that this legal market has been used as a cover for trade in [illegal ivory](#).

Under the new proposals, to be debated over the next three months before legislation is introduced, sales of older items would be banned, with some exemptions including musical instruments and items deemed to have "significant historic, artistic or cultural value."

'No time to waste'

The US-based Wildlife Conservation Society said it was "a critical step in joining other nations to reverse the precipitous decline of African [elephants](#)."

"The implementation of a strict ban without loopholes that traders can exploit is essential in the fight against the poaching of elephants and the trafficking in their ivory," the group added.

But World Wildlife Fund (WWF) chief executive Tanya Steeler warned there was a long way to go and "no time to waste."

"Whilst discussions roll on, 55 African elephants a day are killed. We need to be the generation that ends the illegal ivory trade once and for all.

"This is about a lot more than banning ivory sales in one country. It means working with global leaders and communities around the world, particularly in China and south-east Asia, to implement bans," she said.

The United States—the world's second-largest consumer market for illegal ivory after China—has announced a near-total ban on the trade of African elephant ivory with the exception of antiques.

China has also said it will ban all ivory trade and processing by the end of the year in a move hailed by conservationists as a "game changer" for elephants.

African ivory is highly sought after in China, where it is seen as a status symbol, with prices for a kilo (2.2 pounds) reaching as high as \$1,100 (940 euros).

The WWF says more than 20,000 African elephants die every year to feed the ivory [trade](#) in Hong Kong and Asia.

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