

# Conservation group says Japan aiding in illegal ivory trade (Update)

December 20 2017, by Elaine Kurtenbach



In this June 24, 2017 photo provided by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, ivory products are on sale with price tags, at an antiques fairs in Tokyo. A conservation group says Japan's lax controls over its domestic stock of ivory

are encouraging illegal exports to other countries and undermining efforts to end trafficking in elephant tusks. A report supported by the World Wildlife Fund said researchers found antiques companies were buying a large number of elephant tusks that are not registered as required by law. Hundreds of ivory items are being sold by e-commerce sites, often to visitors from other Asian countries such as China. (TRAFFIC via AP)

Japan's lax controls over its domestic stock of ivory are encouraging illegal exports to other countries and undermining efforts to end trafficking in elephant tusks, a report said Wednesday.

The report, compiled with support by the World Wildlife Fund, said researchers found antique dealers are buying a large number of elephant tusks in Japan that are not registered as required by law.

It said hundreds of ivory items are sold each year by e-commerce sites, often to visitors from other Asian countries such as China.

The report said whole tusks were being advertised without needed proof of their provenance.

"Japan's domestic ivory market availability is targeted for procuring products from the antiques and tourist markets for illegal ivory exports, as well as through physical and online auctions," the report said.

It said some dealings were akin to criminal syndicates facilitating the smuggling of ivory into China, based on investigations into seizures of such items.

It cited data from the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC, which found that an average of 2,447 ivory items worth more than



a shop in Tokyo's tourists area. A conservation group says Japan's lax controls over its domestic stock of ivory are encouraging illegal exports to other countries and undermining efforts to end trafficking in elephant tusks. A report supported by the World Wildlife Fund said researchers found antiques companies were buying a large number of elephant tusks that are not registered as required by law. Hundreds of ivory items are being sold by e-commerce sites, often to visitors from other Asian countries such as China. (TRAFFIC via AP)

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, or CITES, bans international trade in ivory in principle to protect endangered African elephants. It has called for closing domestic ivory markets in all member states, and many countries have complied.

China announced last year that it would shut down its ivory trade by the end of 2017. Hong Kong, the world's largest retail ivory market, plans to end local trading by 2021.

But Japan has resisted closing its own domestic market, contending that ivory products traded inside the country are not acquired through poaching or illegal deals. Instead, earlier this year the government approved a proposal to tighten registration requirements and inspections for its more than 8,000 ivory retailers and manufacturers.

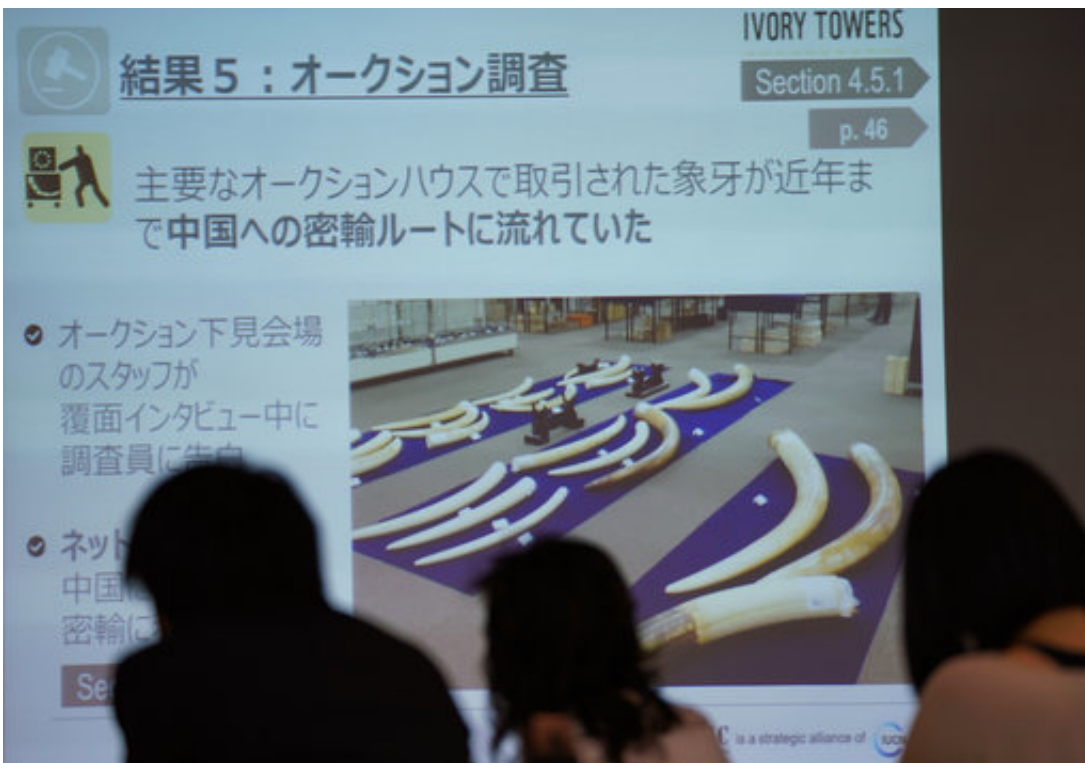




WWF Japan members attend a press conference at the Foreign Press Center in Tokyo, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2017. The conservation group says Japan's lax controls over its domestic stock of ivory are encouraging illegal exports to other countries and undermining efforts to end trafficking in elephant tusks. A report supported by the World Wildlife Fund said researchers found antiques companies were buying a large number of elephant tusks that are not registered as required by law. Hundreds of ivory items are being sold by e-commerce sites, often to visitors from other Asian countries such as China. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

The e-commerce giant Rakuten Inc. said it would ban sales of ivory items in its online marketplace. It also banned sales of products using parts of sea turtles.

Critics say the tusk registration system amounts to a form of ivory laundering because it can legalize tusks acquired illegally.



The Images of elephant's tusks are seen on a screen as WWF Japan held a press conference at Foreign Press Center in Tokyo, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2017. The conservation group says Japan's lax controls over its domestic stock of ivory are encouraging illegal exports to other countries and undermining efforts to end trafficking in elephant tusks. A report supported by the World Wildlife Fund said researchers found antiques companies were buying a large number of elephant tusks that are not registered as required by law. Hundreds of ivory items are being sold by e-commerce sites, often to visitors from other Asian countries such as China. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

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