

Zimbabwe wants ivory ban lifted so it can sell \$600-mln stockpile

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Some countries in southern Africa are pushing for a global ivory ban to be relaxed as their elephant numbers grow

Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa opened a UN wildlife summit on Monday with a call to lift the global ivory trade ban so that

the country can sell \$600 million of stockpiled tusks.

Mnangagwa said selling the elephant tusks and rhino horns would enable the impoverished nation to fund conservation efforts for 20 years.

Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Zambia have all cited the growing number of elephants in some areas in their bid to have the ban relaxed, angering many conservationists.

Opening the UNEP wildlife economy summit in Victoria Falls, Mnangagwa called "for the [free trade](#) in hunting products as these can have an important impact on national and [local economies](#)."

"Currently Zimbabwe has about \$600 million dollars worth of ivory and [rhino horns](#) stocked—most of which is from natural attrition of those animals.

"The revenue would suffice to finance our operational [conservation efforts](#) for the next two decades."

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which prohibits the sale of ivory, is under pressure from southern African countries that have seen growing elephant numbers.

But over the past decade, the population of elephants across Africa has fallen by about 111,000 to 415,000, largely due to poaching, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Botswana recently sparked controversy by lifting its ban on hunting, saying the move would help control a booming elephant population that was damaging farmers' livelihoods.

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