

SPEECH BY HON. MORRIS DZORO EGH, MP, MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND WILDLIFE DURING THE OPENING OF THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP IN PREPARATION FOR THE 14TH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO CITES MAY 18, 2007 AT SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI.

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Distinguished delegates from Southern Sudan, Rwanda, Benin, Mali, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Burundi, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Nigeria and Congo DRC

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and the people of Kenya and on my behalf, I welcome you to Kenya and to the city of Nairobi. It pleases me to see you at this very important meeting to jointly chart the destiny of African elephant. I am very delighted to welcome you all into this meeting. To all, I say KARIBUNI Kenya.

Distinguished delegates, as a sign of our commitment to the conservation of wild flora and fauna, Kenya has ratified various environmental conventions, among them the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Kenya is also a party to the Ramsar Convention, Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nation Framework Convention on Climatic Change.

As you may recall, Kenya has hosted several Conference of Parties to various environmental conventions, the most recent being the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 2), in conjunction with the 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 12), in Nairobi from 6 to 17 November 2006. This signifies the value that Kenya attaches to environmental treaties.

In Africa, we have been endowed to share a unique God-given heritage in the form of wild flora and fauna. The elephant is recognised as a special species and a flagship representing the magnificent and diverse wildlife resources in our continent.

Sadly, Africa has had a distressing history with her elephants; plummeting from 1.3 million elephants in the early 1970s to an estimate of between 400,000 and 600,000. Kenya's population followed the same trend declining from 167,000 elephants in 1963 to 16,000 by 1989. Although Kenya has about 30,000 elephants today, it is yet to recover her population.

Distinguished delegates, recognizing the adverse effect that illegal international ivory trade was having on the survival of elephants, the African elephant was placed on Appendix I of the CITES in 1989. Kenya, together with many of the countries represented here proposed and supported this Appendix I listing.

In the last 18 years, the positive effect of the ban on ivory trade has been recorded in some populations across Africa. For instance, Kenya's population has shown some recovery from as low as 16,000 individuals in 1989 to the current 30,000. While we are proud of this achievement, these signs of recovery in some elephant populations have led to calls for a relaxation on the ban on ivory trade by some countries.

The ivory debate has since continued to be one of the major points of disagreement over elephant conservation among African elephant range states. Although compromises have been reached in the various Range State Dialogue Meetings, there is still no meeting of minds to address the issue.

During the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties held in Bangkok, Thailand, in October 2004, three southern African countries, namely South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, were allowed a second experimental one-off sale of their ivory stockpiles amounting to 60 tonnes. The Conference of Parties agreed that this sale would only proceed subject to fulfillment of stringent conditions, most of which were to be realised through a programme called Monitoring Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) instituted by the CITES secretariat in 1999.

Ladies and gentlemen, as at the 54th Meeting of the Standing Committee in Geneva last year, the conditions had not been met and hence this sale has not been done yet. The illegal trade in ivory and illegal killing of elephants has continued unabated in many parts of Africa since the partial lifting of the African Elephants and the experimental trade.

It is in this regard that Kenya and Mali submitted a joint proposal to amend the annotations regarding the populations of the African elephant of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. These amendments include a 20-year Moratorium on ivory trade and amendments to the annotations for the African elephant populations of these countries.

It is on this premise that Kenya organised this meeting to share ideas, experiences and challenges that we all face in the conservation and management of the African elephant.

Distinguished delegates, we need elephants to thrive in all corners of Africa, we can achieve this by not allowing the trade in ivory at least for 20 years, to give ample time to evaluate the enforcement challenges on elephant conservation in Africa and even Asia.

Indeed a strong case exists for supporting the proposal for a 20-year suspension on ivory trade, taking into account issues concerning biology, trade, enforcement and management. In particular, the moratorium will provide ample time for elephant populations to recover as well as action to be taken against escalating illegal ivory trade. It will also provide for the development and implementation of new methodologies and cooperative mechanisms to support the enforcement of measures against expanding illegal markets.

The 20 years will also allow support of the Action Plan to control domestic markets and

the enactment of new enforcement legislation. At the same time, it will refine Monitoring for Illegal Killing of Elephant programme (MIKE) into a more effective tool.

The 20-year moratorium will also allow for determination of the effects of the one-off stockpile sale. It will also provide an opportunity to develop a long-term and holistic approach to decision-making on ivory trade and elephant management across the species. On the same note, this will allow for the development of solutions that benefit local communities. The ban will also be precautionary in view of many uncertainties and controversies associated with elephant populations and ivory trade.

Distinguished delegates, it is my hope that at the end of this meeting we shall enrich the Kenya-Mali proposal and come up with a common position for presentation at the African Elephant Range State meeting on 30th May to 1st June at The Hague in Netherlands, which I will personally attend.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to declare this Consultative Meeting officially opened and wish you all productive deliberations and a pleasant stay in Kenya.

Thank you!

Hon. Morris Dzero, EGH, MP
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