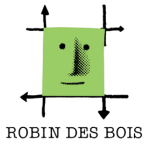




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Via electronic mail (Ivonne.higuero@cites.org)

Ms. Ivonne Higuero
CITES Secretary General
Maison internationale de l'environnement
11 Chemin des Anémones
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Switzerland

September 23, 2021

Concerning the Statement issued by the CITES Secretariat - Exports of live wild-caught African elephants from Namibia

Dear Madame Secretary General,

We would like to thank the Secretariat for the update to its recent statement on proposed elephant exports from Namibia. We appreciate this rapid response, following our letter to you dated 15 September. However, having considered the text with great care, in our opinion the wording of the update does not address the substance of our concerns, and continues to give the impression that the Secretariat implicitly shares Namibia's interpretation and endorses Namibia's intent to export live elephants under the terms of Article III of the Convention.

The press has certainly taken the view that the Secretariat has directly endorsed these exports. The *Namibian Sun*, in an article dated 10 September¹, stated that, according to the Secretariat, "Namibia must trade such live specimens under Article III of the convention".² An even more explicit article in the regional newspaper, the *Southern Times*, dated 18 September³ (the day after the updated statement appeared) is headlined "CITES gives green light for sale of live elephants" and states that CITES "has given Namibia the thumbs up to commercially trade live elephants" and that "CITES' approval of Namibia's proposed sale of jumbos could make things easier for other countries in the region".⁴ These articles, in our view, are potentially

¹<https://www.namibiansun.com/news/namibia-to-comply-with-cites-during-elephant-trade2021-09-10>

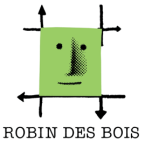
² <https://www.namibiansun.com/news/namibia-to-comply-with-cites-during-elephant-trade2021-09-10/>

³<https://southerntimesafrica.com/jumbo-trade-gets-green-light/>

⁴ <https://africasustainableconservation.com/2021/09/18/namibia-cites-gives-green-light-for-sale-of-live-elephants/>



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embarrassing to the Secretariat and may harm implementation of the Convention. More crucially, they indicate that the wording in the Secretariat's update was insufficient to clarify that the Secretariat was not purporting to pre-empt the mandated deliberations of the Standing Committee by endorsing these exports.

As stated in our original letter to you, we firmly believe that the appropriate course for the Secretariat would be to withdraw its statement altogether. We reiterate that request, but we believe that it is now imperative for the Secretariat to go further and state clearly that it has revised its earlier statement (as opposed to simply updating it), that it does not endorse the export of live elephants from Namibia outside of the terms of the existing annotation, that Namibia's interpretation of whether Article III can be used for such exports remains under consideration by the Standing Committee, and that Parties with Appendix II elephant populations subject to annotations should not consider any exports of live elephants under Article III unless and until the Standing Committee has concluded its deliberations and, critically, its recommendations have been presented to, debated by, and adopted (or not) by the Conference of the Parties.

The export of these elephants could be imminent. Therefore, your clarification as to the Secretariat's position is a matter of priority. As the media has continued to report on Namibia's planned exports and the Secretariat's original statement, our organizations intend to continue to publicly oppose the capture and export of live elephants for ex-situ destinations. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter directly with you.

Thank you for your attention.

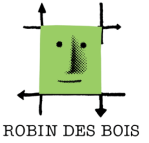
Best regards,

Vera Weber, President, Fondation Franz Weber
Georgina Lamb, CEO, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation
Daniela Freyer, Co-Founder, Pro Wildlife
Dr. Mark Jones, Head of Policy, Born Free Foundation
Dr. Liz Tyson, Programs Director, Born Free USA
Iris Ho, Director, Wildlife Policy, Humane Society International
Will Travers, President, Species Survival Network
Heike Henderson, Member of the Board, Future for Elephants
DJ Schubert, Wildlife Biologist, Animal Welfare Institute
Charlotte Nithart, Director, Robin des Bois

Annex: Letter sent by the present organisations to the CITES Secretariat on September 15



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