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Chinese Government Complicity in Illegal Ivory Trade is Fuelling Epidemic of African Elephant Poaching

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WASHINGTON, June 1 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- A new report published today reveals comprehensive evidence that Chinese authorities are complicit in the illegal ivory trade, which is fueling a surge in elephant poaching across Africa. The report release coincides with the opening of the 169-nation Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in The Hague, Netherlands.

Made in China - How China's Illegal Ivory Trade is Causing a 21st Century African Elephant Disaster, published by the Environmental Investigation Agency, exposes how Chinese government ministries, government-owned companies, and nationalized industries are openly flouting the international ban on ivory trade, all while China prepares to stage a "green Olympics."

EIA President Allan Thornton: "China's illegal ivory trade is fuelling a massive new poaching crisis for Africa's elephants. We are calling on the Government of China to ban all domestic trade in ivory before the Beijing Olympics. Unless the Government of China acts now, African elephants in many countries will once again face extinction."

The report is based on eight years of undercover investigations into illegal ivory trade in China, Hong Kong, and Africa and documents how:

-- China's most powerful bodies have been implicated in ivory trade, including the Communist Party of China, the Ministry of Defense, and the China National Petroleum Corporation; -- 110 tons of ivory have gone missing from China's government held ivory stocks; -- China and Chinese nationals are implicated in illegal ivory trade involving 13 African nations where extensive elephant poaching is wiping out many elephant populations, including Sudan, Central African Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Mali; -- Chinese traders have been allowed to export ivory in contravention of the international ban; -- China has failed to implement the international ban that prohibits imports and exports of African elephant ivory for the past 16 years; -- Chinese authorities have sold poached ivory, seized from smugglers onto China's domestic market, as recently as November 2004 when almost one ton of ivory was auctioned; -- Ivory traders stated they have continued to purchase ivory from government stocks throughout the 1990's and into the 2000's; -- Traders allege that seized stocks of poached ivory are 'disappearing' into government ivory stocks; -- Ivory is widely available across China, despite the fact that official legal ivory stocks would have been exhausted years ago due to the trade ban; -- China is registering dozens of companies to legally sell ivory. View EIA undercover video of managers of the Chinese Government owned company Beijing Gongmei offering to sell and illegally export millions of dollars of elephant ivory at: <http://www.eia-global.org>

Contact:

Allan Thornton, EIA President: (202) 361-6941 (USA)

Julian Newman, Senior Investigator and Campaigner: +44 07966 171191 (UK)

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202-361-6941 (USA), or Julian Newman, Senior Investigator and Campaigner: +44 07966 171191 (UK), both of Environmental Investigation Agency/ /Web site: <http://www.eia-global.org> / CO: Environmental Investigation Agency; EIA ST: District of Columbia, China, Netherlands IN: ENV SU: POL FOR TRD LAW GH-LM -- DCF118 -- 8681 06/01/2007 19:24 EDT <http://www.prnewswire.com>

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