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## **CHINA AND JAPAN COMPETE FOR SOUTHERN IVORY EXPORTS CONSERVATIONISTS FEAR RENEWED SLAUGHTER**

**THE HAGUE, The Netherlands, June 4, 2007 --/WORLD-WIRE/--** In a dramatic decision that threatens to undermine global elephant conservation, delegates to the 55th Meeting of the Standing Committee to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) today confirmed Japan as an approved trading partner for ivory sales, which were first agreed in a controversial 2002 decision by the CITES Parties. But in a testy and sometimes fractious debate, China was not granted the same favored trading status.

The CITES Secretariat determined that Japan's internal ivory market controls were sufficient, despite the serious concerns of several African nations including Kenya, Mali and Ghana. A number of African elephant range States representatives expressed their belief that the decision of the Standing Committee will be seen by poachers and international organised criminal syndicates as a green light to increase their deadly activities.

"Elephants and many African and Asian elephant range States have every reason to be fearful" said Will Travers, CEO of the Born Free Foundation and Chair of the Species Survival Network. "Today's decision belies the reality of what is happening on the ground with respect to elephant poaching and illegal ivory trade. Tens of thousands of Africa's elephants are being poached each year, thousands of kilos of illegal ivory are being regularly intercepted, and sales of unregulated ivory traded over the internet are disturbingly high. Perhaps most concerning is the fact that poaching pressure is likely to fall most intensely on those countries least able to resist and law enforcement officers are losing their lives. It's unconscionable."

In a subsequent submission to the Committee, China stated that granting parity with Japan would create healthy competition, increase prices, and deliver greater financial benefits to ivory exporting countries.

However, numerous countries objected to China's request and the Standing Committee was split 50:50 in an apparently unprecedented vote. Switzerland, the depository government of CITES, was unwilling to cast a deciding vote and the motion to approve China was not carried.

In a confusing moment, John Sellar, the CITES Secretariat's Senior Enforcement Officer inexplicably indicated that increased legal trade might actually result in decreased poaching, a counterintuitive scenario inconsistent with historical fact. The 1989 international ivory trade ban brought about a dramatic decline in poaching and the price of ivory. However, subsequent "one-off" stockpile sales and proposals to reopen trade have been closely aligned with increased poaching, illegal ivory interceptions, and the dramatic rise in the price of ivory, such that some experts suggest things are as bad today as at any time in the last 20 years.

"This sets a bad precedent. Sponsors of the proposals to allow further trade in elephant ivory that will be considered by the full 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES in the next two weeks will undoubtedly rejoice in Japan's new trading status; meanwhile, many African and Asian elephant Range States, together with conservationists representing tens of millions of people across the globe will enter into the next 14 days of negotiations with a sense of foreboding," said Mary Rice, Senior Elephant Campaigner with the Environmental Investigation Agency. "It's deja vu... it could be the bloody ivory trade of the 1980s all over again."

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