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Information on the international African Elephant Summit

An international summit devoted to African elephant conservation will take place in Botswana's capital, Gaborone, from 2 to 4 December 2013. This conference aims to lay the foundation for successfully combating the escalation in poaching of the world's largest land mammals. A total of 50 countries have been invited. High-level representatives are expected from the countries of Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Gabon) and Asia (China, Vietnam and Malaysia) where the issue is politically relevant. The conference is being organised by the government of Botswana and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). The Federal Environment Ministry helped launch the conference and is providing financial support.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Altmaier made the following statement: "A global problem such as ivory smuggling requires global solutions. Germany will play an active role in making connections and moving things forward at this summit devoted to African elephant conservation. We are not interested in assigning blame, but rather in solving the problem. We all must do our part -- countries of origin, transit and destination alike. We owe this to the elephants, but also to the many people who are affected by organised wildlife crime."

1. Why is an international conference on African elephant conservation necessary?

African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) are at great risk in large parts of what is left of the territory they occupy. Ivory poaching is a significant cause of this. International trade in ivory is prohibited by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), but the problem of ivory poaching and smuggling has still become dramatically worse.

One reason for this is the increasing prosperity of many Asian countries, which has led to a higher demand for luxury goods such as ivory. Political instability and corruption in some African countries also play a role. The result is a dramatic increase in poaching, not only of elephants, but also of many other animals such as rhinoceroses, as well as plants and valuable woods.

Poaching is also no longer a problem limited to nature conservation and species protection. It has also become a problem for economic development and security in many parts of the world. Today, wildlife crime is more organised and militarised than ever before. Profits from these activities are comparable to those from the traffic in drugs and people. These profits are in turn



used to finance other criminal activities with fatal consequences for the affected countries, some of which have instable political structures.

The illegal trade in ivory drives the global poaching crisis, so the attempt to reverse the trend must start with this.

2. Who is participating in the conference?

The African Elephant Summit brings together high-level politicians from countries of origin, transit and consumption. Botswana's president, Seretse Khama Ian Khama, has invited a total of 50 countries, including several heads of state.

The participation of African countries particularly affected by poaching and used as transit countries, such as Tanzania or Kenya, is important. Major destination countries such as China, Japan and Vietnam as well as frequently used transit countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines are also actively participating in the conference. Western donor countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom as well as the United States, France and the Netherlands have also been invited.

3. What issues will the conference deal with?

The goal of the conference is to produce a joint declaration that includes urgent measures to be taken. In particular the Federal Environment Ministry considers the following concrete decisions to be important:

- **Legislation:** Poaching and smuggling are still seen as minor offences in many countries. We need to create an awareness that this is serious crime and that offences carry heavy penalties. Many countries must adjust their legislation.
- **Law enforcement at the national level:** Because it is an important national security issue, the fight against poachers and smugglers must be dealt with at a high political level. The equipment of police and rangers must be improved so that they can take action against heavily armed and well organised poachers.
- **Law enforcement and cooperation at the international level:** Networks between affected countries must be established and expanded. Technical and financial assistance in the fight against poaching must be increased and strategically coordinated, for example in the context of the African Elephant Fund. Federal Environment Ministry supported the establishment of the Fund and is a member of its Steering Committee.
- **Education and public relations:** The ivory-consuming countries are promoting educational campaigns about the serious consequences for both people and nature caused



by the purchase of illegal ivory. This can bring about reduced demand for illegal ivory products.

Concrete measures will be negotiated at the conference. The conference will also deal with the financing of the measures by affected countries and international donors such as the World Bank.

4. Why is the conference taking place in Botswana?

No other African country still has as many elephants as Botswana. There is currently a population of around 208,000 elephants, more than a third of the global total (ca. 556,000). This is a result of the strict and effective conservation and management of the elephants in Botswana. However, the number of killings and smuggling cases is increasing even here. The example of Botswana shows that one country cannot tackle the problem of poaching on its own. Committed international cooperation is needed to effectively protect the elephants.

5. What is Germany's role at the conference?

At the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2012, the Federal Government, supported by other countries including the United Kingdom and the United States, proposed organising a high-level global summit on elephants. The corresponding resolution passed by a large majority. The Federal Environment Ministry not only launched the initiative, it has also provided significant funding for the organisation of the summit and been actively involved in the negotiations before and during the conference.

6. What happens after the conference?

The summit's goal is to see the adopted measures against ivory poaching implemented in the individual countries as quickly as possible in order to reverse the negative trend. The signatories of the declaration are to report on implementation after 14 months. The conference will decide how implementation should be coordinated in the future.

More current news, conference documents and background information can be found online at:

http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/species/who_we_are/ssc_specialist_groups_and_red_list_authorities_directory/mammals/african_elephant/summit/