

# Voices for Wildlife

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## Process for Establishing Future Ivory Trade Rejected at CITES Conference



Posted by [Rachael Bale](#) in [Voices for Wildlife](#) on September 26, 2016

A herd of elephants roams in Uganda (Reporterruthie/Flickr)

For the last nine years, [CITES](#) parties have been negotiating a “decision-making mechanism,” (DMM), which would establish a process for a future trade in ivory. Today, the parties of CITES voted to end the long-running discussion.

The notion of a DMM was [established](#) at CoP14 in 2007 as part of a compromise that put in place a nine-year moratorium on the international ivory trade. Namibia and several other countries agreed to the moratorium back then so long as a DMM was established.



Since then, the development of the DMM has only become more controversial as the poaching crisis escalated. There has been a net decline of approximately 110,000 African elephants from 2007 through 2015, according to a [report](#) released yesterday. Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe put forward a [proposal](#) at this week’s CoP17 conference in Johannesburg calling for the DMM to be established. A group of eight other African states put forward a counter-[proposal](#) calling for the discussions to be abandoned. Both proposals were rejected; the former by a secret ballot.

A third vote, on a [proposal](#) put forward by the CITES Standing Committee itself asking the parties to decide on whether DMM discussions should be extended, was rejected.

That was the final word—the DMM is off the table.

It's yet to be seen how Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe will respond. In their proposal calling for the establishment of the DMM, they essentially threaten to pull out of the ivory trade moratorium if DMM discussions are ended.

“It was on the basis of [establishing] this DMM that Namibia and others agreed to the moratorium,” said the Namibian representative during debate before the vote. But the debate isn't over yet: Later this week, CITES will be debating two other proposals from Namibia and Zimbabwe that could revive the ivory trade.