

# Zimbabwe, Namibia fail to lift ivory ban

NAMIBIA and Zimbabwe failed yesterday to convince a UN body that they should be allowed to export ivory — after they claimed this would protect rather than further endanger Africa's elephants.

Member nations of the UN's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) voted overwhelmingly against pleas to sell tusks seized from poachers or taken from animals that died naturally or were put down.

In secret ballots, Namibia's proposal lost 73 to 27 and Zimbabwe's 80 to 21, well short of the necessary two-thirds.

Ginette Hemley, head of the Cites delegation for conservation group WWF, said poaching for tusks had pushed African elephants into steep decline. "Opening up any legal trade in ivory would complicate efforts to conserve them.

"It could offer criminal syndicates new avenues to launder poached ivory, undermining law enforcement."

Namibia and Zimbabwe said sales were needed to fund conservation and elephant numbers were stable or rising, triggering conflict with poor farmers. Zimbabwe said it had a 70-ton stockpile worth an estimated \$35-million.

African nations like Kenya opposed reopening ivory trade, saying it will spur demand and threaten their elephants.

Kenyan Environment Minister, Judi Wakhungu, said "ivory is worth more on a live

“It is worth  
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animal

animal". Sports hunting is also banned in Kenya, which focuses on wildlife-watching safaris and ecotourism. In April it burnt 105 tons of ivory.

Tens of thousands of African elephants were poached in the past decade to supply ivory to Asia where it is prized for carvings and other decoration.

Ivory sales were banned globally in 1989, but Cites let Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe sell stockpiles to Japan in 1999. They were joined in 2008 by South Africa in sales to China and Japan.

Cites proposed on Sunday that countries with legal ivory markets, not regulated by the ban on cross-border trade, close them as they support poaching.

Elephant populations have fallen drastically in east and