

PROPOSALS TO WORK AGAINST CONSERVATION

Kenya and Mali have submitted a joint proposal for consideration by CITES COP 14 which seeks to have a 20 year moratorium on trade in elephant products from Zimbabwe.

This year's CITES Conference will be held from June 3 –15 at The Hague in Netherlands and Zimbabwe is set to send to this meeting, a delegation comprising various stakeholders in wildlife conservation and tourism.

The proposal has serious negative implications on trade in raw and worked ivory, the future of safari hunting in Zimbabwe, wildlife conservation and tourism.

This will lead to a huge loss of revenue in foreign currency earnings to the economy and to local communities who are dependent on utilizing wildlife through the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE).

The greatest strength of the CAMPFIRE programme has been its ability to generate revenue for the benefit of local communities, thereby reducing human and animal conflict and the unsustainable utilization of natural resources. The programme works best when there is a systematic linkable between the benefits and natural resources management in the minds of the local people. Any lack of appreciation of the value of natural resources by local communities is therefore a threat to the nation's biological diversity. The proposal by Kenya is likely to affect the CAMPFIRE programme negatively,

Furthermore the proposals by Kenya and Mali lack scientific credibility raise all manner of banal irrelevancies and are not worth considering at all.

The truth is that, Zimbabwe is a success story in wildlife conservation as evidenced by increasing populations of most animal species, especially elephant, while the same cannot be said about wildlife in Kenya and Mali.

The two claims that promoting legal trade in ivory is actually going to prompt illegal ivory trade elsewhere and hence poaching of elephants in their own countries. This is not true, because poaching has always been there, what they need to do is to improve on their anti-poaching mechanism. Zimbabwe has been successful on this part that is why the country is having a health elephant population.

Allowing this proposal to sail through will be just as good as rewarding failures in conservation and punishing those who have excelled in wildlife management.