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African Ranger, Movie Director, Hong Kong Lawmaker, Wildlife NGOs Team Up to Urge Legislative Council to Support Ivory Ban With No Compensation for Ivory Traders

ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS / FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HONG KONG (06 September 2017) — African elephants are being slaughtered at alarming and unsustainable rates of killing, and Hong Kong's ivory trade has been proven to be a key driver in the poaching crisis.

Today, Hong Kong lawmakers are meeting at a Legislative Council (LegCo) 'Bill Committee on Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Bill 2017' to listen to the views of the public on the government's proposal to ban the sale of ivory over a five year period.

While the Hong Kong public overwhelmingly supports the government's proposed ivory ban, the stakes for Africa's elephants are so high that many individuals have flown in from overseas to voice their support for the Hong Kong government's proposed ivory ban in the face of stiff opposition by local ivory traders. They will present their testimonies at a public hearing to be held at LegCo at 9am on 06 September. WildAid Hong Kong's Wildlife Campaigner Alex Hofford and Hong Kong Lawmaker Elizabeth Quat are delighted to be joined from Kenya by Chris Leadismo, Head of Anti-Poaching, Save The Elephants and from the United States; Kate Brooks, Award-Winning Movie Director 'The Last Animals' and Iris Ho, Wildlife Campaigner, Humane Society International.

Together, the message that these diverse groups and individuals is delivering to all Hong Kong lawmakers is simply '**Please Support the Hong Kong Government's Ivory Ban With No Compensation for Ivory Traders**'.

Alex Hofford, Wildlife Campaigner, WildAid Hong Kong said, "*WildAid is urgently calling on the Hong Kong government to speed up the process of banning the city's ivory trade with no compensation to ivory traders as well as to increase the maximum penalties for wildlife crime. Up to 600,000 African elephants were slaughtered in the first ivory war which was only halted in the nick of time by the 1989 international ivory ban. Much of the ivory from over half a million illegally-killed elephants entered into a then legal international trade, and a very large proportion of it ended up right here in Hong Kong. Given the huge percentage of illegal ivory in circulation in Hong Kong at the time of the 1990 ban, it would be immoral for the Hong Kong taxpayer to foot the bill for any ivory trade compensation scheme.*"

Hong Kong's ivory traders have had nearly 28 years since the international ivory ban in 1990 to sell their stocks. As part of the proposed ban, the Hong Kong government has afforded them an over-generous five more years until 31 December 2021 to sell out their last legal, registered stock, and still they are demanding compensation. The Hong Kong government has expressed concerns that if it were to pay compensation to the traders a new wave of elephant poaching would be triggered, and so to avoid that they would have to withdraw the bill. Because

20,000 to 30,000 African elephants are still being lost each year, we must support the proposed ban with '**no compensation, no ivory possession license buy-back, no ex gratia payment**'.

According to government figures there is still some seventy tonnes of legal ivory available in the Hong Kong market today.

Hong Kong lawmaker Elizabeth Quat said, *“Last month's tragic murder by trafficking syndicates of Wayne Lotter, a heroic elephant conservationist in Tanzania, should act as a wake up call to the Hong Kong people that the ivory trade taking place right here in our city has a very real, direct and often disastrous effect on rangers' lives and their loved ones – as well as the elephant populations they strive to protect. Over the past ten years, around 1,000 rangers have been killed in line of duty protecting elephants and other endangered species of wildlife. I urge my fellow Hong Kong lawmakers to pass the government's ivory ban bill smoothly with no last minute amendments.”*

In July 2017, a 7.2 tonnes illegal shipment of ivory was seized by Hong Kong Customs, laying bare Hong Kong's inglorious role in the African elephant poaching crisis which is being directly caused by the international ivory trade.

Kate Brooks, Director of 'The Last Animals' movie said *“International criminal organizations linked to drug trade are plundering Africa's natural resources and decimating its elephant populations. It is unconscionable for the trade of ivory to be permissible when rangers are being routinely murdered and industrial size shipments of ivory continue to be seized coming into Hong Kong. Only the widows of rangers, and the thousands of African children who have been left fatherless, should be eligible for financial compensation, not ivory traders.”*

Giving the view from the African elephant range state Kenya, Chris Leadismo, Head of Anti-Poaching, Save The Elephants, said, *“I represent the community that I am from – the Samburu people - and many others that have suffered insecurity and death at the hands of poachers who are willing to supply the ivory trade at all costs. We have fought hard to turn the tide of poaching and for three years now, elephant births have exceeded deaths in our part of Kenya. If Hong Kong traders get compensated, more elephants will die to fuel this trade, and I will lose more comrades, or even my life as a wildlife ranger. I commend the Hong Kong government for the stand they have taken, and urge them to close the trade once and for all.”*

Iris Ho, Wildlife Campaign Manager, Humane Society International said, *“Hong Kong's international reputation is at stake as conservationists, from Africa, North America to Asia, are closely watching its every step to outlaw the ivory trade. Hong Kong must do all that it can to rid the stain on its reputation as the global hub for blood ivory. No one should be compensated financially for participating in a trade that has facilitated transnational crime, taken the lives of wildlife rangers and decimated hundreds of thousands of elephants. As other countries are considering a similar prohibition policy on their domestic ivory trade, Hong Kong's actions can set ripple effects beyond its borders and must be made with utmost prudence and integrity to protect African elephants and the communities living alongside them.”*

[Hong Kong's Legislative Council public hearing on ivory ban will take place at 9am on 06 September 2017 in Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex. Coverage is invited and encouraged.](#)

Hashtags: #SupportHongKongIvoryBan #SupportHKIvoryBan #SAVETheLastAnimals

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About WildAid

WildAid's mission is to end the illegal wildlife trade in our lifetimes by reducing demand for endangered species products through public awareness campaigns. WildAid is the only organization focused on reducing the demand for these products, with the strong and simple message: 'When The Buying Stops, The Killing Can Too!'
www.wildaid.org

About Elizabeth Quat, BBS, JP

Hon Elizabeth Quat, BBS, JP, is a Legislative Council Member, an IT professional, Chairman of the LegCo IT and Broadcasting Panel. She founded numerous non-profit organizations and professional bodies, including the founding of 'Internet Professional Association' in 1999, 'e-Health Consortium' in 2005, 'Energy Saving & Environment Concern Alliance' in 2007, 'Green ICT Consortium' in 2009, 'Love-Family Foundation' in 2013, and 'Smart City Consortium' in 2015. From both inside and outside the Council, she strives to promote Hong Kong's economic development, innovation and technology development, and devoted her efforts in policies particularly related to women and family affairs, security, and environmental and animal protection.

About Save the Elephants

Save The Elephants works to secure a future for elephants in a rapidly changing world. Leaders in elephant science, STE provides cutting-edge scientific insights into elephant behaviour, intelligence, and long-distance movement and applies them to the long-term challenges of elephant conservation. We reach out to hearts and minds through our thriving Education and Outreach programs, turning people into long term ambassadors for wildlife. Our human elephant conflict mitigation research has successfully reduced the number of crop-raiding incidents and provides farmers with elephant-friendly alternative sources of income. To battle the current surge in ivory poaching, our Elephant Crisis Fund is identifying and supporting the most effective global partners to stop poaching, thwart traffickers and end demand for ivory.

www.savetheelephants.org

About Humane Society International

Humane Society International (HSI) and its partner organisations together constitute one of the world's largest animal protection organisations. For more than 25 years, HSI has been working for the protection of all animals through the use of science, advocacy, education and hands on programs. Celebrating animals and confronting cruelty worldwide.

www.hsi.org

About Kate Brooks

Kate Brooks is an American filmmaker and photojournalist who has chronicled conflict and human rights issues for nearly two decades. Her photographs are regularly published in American and European magazines, and have been exhibited in galleries and museums around the globe. Brooks's passion for filmmaking was sparked from working as a contributing cinematographer on the documentary film *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*. In 2012-13, Brooks was awarded a Knight Wallace Fellowship at the University of Michigan. There she researched the poaching crisis before embarking on directing *The Last Animals*, which debuted earlier this year at Tribeca Film Festival. Her drive and passion for this issue come from the fundamental belief that time is running out and that we are at a critical moment in natural history.

www.katebrooks.com

www.thelastanimals.com