



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0977-2016, Version: A

Proposed Res. No. 977-A

Resolution in support of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed rulemaking to the Endangered Species Act related to the African elephant.

By Council Members Espinal, Palma and Rodriguez

Whereas, Ivory is a hard, white material consisting of dentin, a component of tooth and bone, typically forming tusks in animals such as elephants, walruses and other animals; and

Whereas, Humans have used ivory to create works of art and utility from prehistoric times to the present; and

Whereas, Elephants, which possess the largest tusks of any other living animal, have long been hunted for their ivory resulting in a major decline of the elephant population; and

Whereas, The African Elephant is particularly vulnerable, as unlike the Asian elephant, both male and female African elephants have tusks; and

Whereas, Conservationists estimate that roughly 35,000 African elephants are poached annually to meet global demand; and

Whereas, The problem of poaching African elephants for ivory in the Congo region has been exacerbated by organized militias and terrorist groups funding their operations, at least in part, through the illegal ivory trade; and

Whereas, The Tanzanian government recently announced that it had lost 60% of its elephants in the past five years; and

Whereas, The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement whose goal is to ensure that international trade in species of plants and animals does not threaten their survival; and

Whereas, The text of the CITES agreement was agreed upon by the governments of 80 sovereign nations, including the United States, in March of 1973-the agreement took effect in 1975; and

Whereas, CITES membership has since grown to 181 participating nations, and its protections cover over 35,000 species worldwide; and

Whereas, In the United States, CITES was implemented through the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which was signed into law on December 28, 1973; and

Whereas, Currently, U.S. law prohibits all importation of raw African elephant ivory, with the exception of the importation of specimens for law enforcement or scientific purposes, and sports trophies for non-commercial purposes; and

Whereas, Current federal law limits domestic commercial transactions of worked African elephant ivory items to items that predate listings of the African elephant in CITES Appendix I-January 18, 1990; and

Whereas, In July of 2013, President Obama, in an effort to prevent species extinction, the financing of terror and to encourage global political and economic stability, issued an executive order calling upon executive departments and agencies to take all appropriate actions within their authority, including the promulgation of rules and regulations and the provision of technical and financial assistance, to combat wildlife trafficking; and

Whereas, The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, implementing the President's executive order, has proposed rules closing regulatory exemptions that have allowed some import and export of African elephant ivory; and

Whereas, The proposed rules would limit the number of sport-hunted African elephant trophies to two

per hunter, per year; and

Whereas, The proposed rules would limit commercial export of ivory to only worked items that are 100 years or older; and

Whereas, The proposed rule would extend commercial export rules to non-commercial exports, additionally exempting worked ivory legally acquired prior to CITES and meets certain additional criteria, i.e., as part of a musical instrument, and worked ivory that predates the federal Endangered Species Act; and

Whereas, The proposed rules would limit foreign commercial transactions subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to the same restrictions placed on interstate commerce; and

Whereas, The proposed rules are a comprehensive effort to end the illegal elephant ivory trade, at home and abroad, and prevent the extinction of the world's largest land animal; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York supports the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed rulemaking to the Endangered Species Act related to the African elephant.

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