

Ten Enhanced Measures to Combat smuggling and Strengthen Control of Local Ivory Trade

The HKSAR Government is committed to the protection of endangered species and abides by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in the regulation of trade in endangered species including elephants.

Hong Kong regulates the import, re-export and domestic sale of ivory under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap 586), the local legislation that gives effect to the CITES. The import and re-export control over ivory is in line with the CITES requirements.

Our control mechanism over local sale of ivory is a domestic measure stricter than the requirements of the CITES. Any person keeping ivory for commercial purposes must obtain a Licence to Possess for each keeping premises.

In view of the growing concerns over the global ivory smuggling and control of local trade in ivory, the AFCD has reviewed the regulatory measures. Enhancement measures being implemented aiming at combating smuggling and strengthening control on the local ivory trade are set out below:-

(1) Enhanced liaison with the Customs and Excise Department and overseas enforcement agencies against smuggling of ivory

The AFCD has been working closely with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) in combating illegal trade in ivory. Vigorous enforcement action through effective application of risk management is maintained to prevent illegally imported ivory from entering Hong Kong. The two departments cooperate with overseas law enforcement agencies such as the Interpol through intelligence exchange and participate in international joint enforcement operations. Recently, the AFCD has participated in “Cobra III” which was an international joint enforcement operation in combating illegal wildlife trade including ivory. The AFCD will strive for the opportunity to participate in international enforcement operation and keep close contact with other counterparts in intelligence exchange. More joint operations, both locally and internationally, will be undertaken to combat smuggling of ivory.

(2) Sniffer dog programme to assist detecting and preventing smuggling of ivory

Sniffer dogs have been deployed at import control points to assist screening of

passengers and parcels for illegal import of live animals and animal products, including ivory. Such operations have recently been extended to screen passengers departing from Hong Kong to the Mainland at boundary control points to detect possible illegal export activities of ivory. Such measure also serves as a deterrent effect to passengers who attempt to carry ivory into or out of Hong Kong illegally.

(3) Enhanced interdepartmental collaboration

An Endangered Species Protection Liaison Group (ESPLG) comprising representatives from the AFCD, C&ED and Hong Kong Police Force has been set up to serve as a platform for the concerned law enforcement departments to co-ordinate efforts in combating illegal trade in endangered species, and to discuss and exchange information with relevant non-governmental organisations on the pertinent issues. To enhance the function of the ESPLG, the frequency of meeting would be increased.

(4) Comprehensive stock taking for pre-ban ivory

The ivory stocks under Licence to Possess are subject to inspection. Previously, stock inspection was conducted on a risk-based approach. To strengthen control on the local ivory trade, comprehensive stock check on all licensed ivory stocks are being conducted. The stock check includes checking the quantity, marking (if any) and the transaction record of ivory and taking photographic records. To prevent potential laundering of licensed ivory by ivory from illegal source, tamper-proof holograms are put on ivory tusks and large cut pieces. In addition, surprise inspections to licensed shops selling ivory are being conducted. Those shops located in business districts and/or holding large quantity of ivory will be inspected more frequently. Surprise inspections to other art and crafts shops are being carried out to check if there is any illegal selling of ivory in the shops.

(5) Stepping up import and re-export control on pre-Convention ivory

The CITES guidelines recommend that ivory tusks and large cut pieces be marked. The usual method of marking is using a marker pen. In order to enhance import and re-export control of pre-Convention ivory and strictly follow the CITES guidelines, it is proposed to introduce a marking system with tamper-proof holograms and photographic records for all the pre-Convention ivory¹. Pre-Convention ivory tusks and cut pieces are labeled with tamper-proof holograms and photographic records be taken upon import and re-export. The processing of pre-Convention raw ivory into

¹ Hologram labeling will not be applied to antiques; photographic record will be taken only.

worked ivory for re-export purpose is subject to monitoring. Photographic records of pre-Convention worked ivory will also be taken.

(6) Extending the use of tamper-proof holograms to pre-ban worked ivory under Licences to Possess

Pre-ban ivory tusks and large cut pieces are marked whereas pre-ban worked ivory are recorded with weight and photos. To prevent potential laundering of illegal ivory, we propose to extend the marking system by providing tamper-proof holograms to all the pre-ban worked ivory by phases. In the first phase, all the pre-ban ivory tusks as well as raw and worked ivory over 0.1 kg would be labeled with holograms and photographic records be taken.

(7) Use of radiocarbon-dating to determine the age of ivory

AFCD will employ radiocarbon dating to determine the legality of ivory and hence to assist enforcement.

(8) Enhanced transparency in licensed ivory stock

To enhance the transparency in the licensed ivory stock, relevant statistics such as the quantities of licensed ivory with breakdown will be published.

(9) Licensees to report change in stock quantity at specified intervals

Currently, a licensed ivory trader is required to record any transaction. Such transaction record is kept by the licensee and subject to inspection by the AFCD officers. To monitor the local trade in ivory more closely, the licensees will be required to report to the AFCD regularly if there is any change in the stock quantity of ivory. A licensee has to return the licence to AFCD for cancellation within a specified time period upon cessation of possession of all the ivory under the licence.

(10) Raising awareness of potential customers on the control of ivory

The licensed traders will be required to display a notice containing necessary information for a member of the public to know that the specified premises is a licensed premises holding ivory for commercial purposes. The notice will carry a warning that the ivory cannot be re-exported out of Hong Kong. Moreover, they will be required to display a poster carrying a message that no ivory can be brought into or out of Hong Kong without a licence issued by AFCD. This measure will apply to the licensees upon licence renewal and issue of new licences.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

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