



Josep Maria Bartomeu i Floreta
 President
 FC Barcelona (Press Department)
 Avinguda Arístides Maillol, without number (Gate 44)
 08028 – Barcelona
 Spain

March 30, 2017

Re: Appeal to Urge Rakuten Inc. to Cease All Elephant Ivory Product Sales

Dear Mr. Bartomeu,

We are writing on behalf of our organizations, representing millions of citizens worldwide, to request your support in urging Rakuten Inc. to immediately cease the sale of elephant ivory products. In the midst of a global elephant poaching crisis, we urge you to call for the end of Rakuten’s role in the ivory trade, and to support elephant range states in Africa and Asia in protecting their iconic elephants from this destructive trade.

Poaching for ivory is driving the slaughter of 20,000 – 30,000 African elephants a year. It is the main cause of decline in Africa’s elephants, and the trade in ivory: fuels, and is fueled by corruption; undermines the rule-of-law; costs the lives of rangers and community members; and is having a destabilising effect on rural communities, many of whom rely on elephant-based ecotourism. A recent continent-wide census showed that elephant populations in southern and eastern Africa had declined by nearly 30 percent from 2007 to 2014.

It is now recognised that all ivory markets contribute to the illegal trade. The vast majority of African elephant range states now support banning the ivory trade and there is a clear global momentum to close down all ivory markets. The United States finalised a near-total ivory ban in 2016, China’s ban will go into effect in 2017 and Hong Kong SAR has also announced plans to end domestic ivory trade. There is also extensive public support for closure of domestic ivory markets globally including in Europe. For example, an opinion poll carried out in September 2016 in the United Kingdom suggested that 85 percent of respondents supported a complete ban on all trade in ivory. At the recent meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), representatives agreed by consensus to adopt a resolution recommending nations contributing to illegal trade or poaching close domestic ivory markets urgently. Most major retail companies have adopted policies to ensure that endangered and threatened species are protected from commercial trade. Amazon, Google, eBay, Etsy, as well as Asian e-commerce companies Alibaba, Tencent, and Taobao, have already enacted laudable policies that prohibit the sale of elephant ivory products on all of their sites globally.

Rakuten Inc. is a globally recognised brand but it is also one of the two largest sellers of ivory online in Japan. Rakuten Ichiba, the Rakuten Inc.’s flagship company, currently hosts thousands of ivory products for sale in Japan. These ivory products are being sold at a time when Africa’s elephants are being killed in their many thousands to make ivory trinkets. Further, due to the lack of effective monitoring of online trade to verify legality,

Rakuten's online platform also provides an avenue for laundering illegal ivory. While Rakuten is contributing to the trade in elephant ivory, it cannot be considered a progressive global brand.

Through the sponsorship deal, FC Barcelona risks being directly associated with Rakuten's role in the ivory trade and the current elephant poaching crisis. Retailers, like Rakuten, that sell ivory are stimulating the demand for ivory products and facilitating loopholes that enable the laundering of illicit ivory. Ending the sale of elephant ivory would demonstrate a comprehensive and progressive global commitment to sustainability and protecting wildlife.

We respectfully appeal for your support and urge you to raise these concerns regarding Rakuten Ichiba's ivory sales with CEO Hiroshi Mikitani and press Rakuten Inc. to adopt a company-wide policy to ban all sales of elephant ivory. We hope FC Barcelona will encourage Rakuten to eliminate its role in the ivory trade – for the sake of its global reputation, and yours.

We would be grateful to speak with you or your representative and kindly request contact with your appointed representative for a brief discussion on this matter. Please contact Allan Thornton, President of the EIA, at +1 (202) 483-6621 or allanthornton@eia-global.org to reply to our correspondence.

Thank you in advance for your positive reply to our appeal to help protect Africa's iconic elephants.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Rice
Executive Director
Environmental Investigation Agency U.K.



Allan Thornton, OBE
President
Environmental Investigation Agency U.S.

On behalf of:

Kaddu Kiwe Sebunya, President, African Wildlife Foundation
Jill Robinson MBE, Dr med vet hc, Hon LLD, Founder & CEO, Animals Asia Foundation
Will Travers, OBE, President and Chief Executive Officer, Born Free Foundation
Prashant K. KHETAN, Chair of the Born Free USA Board of Directors, Born Free USA
Sarah Uhlemann, International Director, Center for Biological Diversity
Angela Sheldrick, Chief Executive Officer, The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust
Oliver Smith, Chief Executive Officer, The David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation
Andrea Crosta, Executive Director & Co-Founder, Elephant Action League
Ilaria Di Silvestre, Programme Leader Wildlife, Eurogroup for Animals
Michele Pickover, Director, EMS Foundation
Iris Ho, Program Manager - Wildlife, Humane Society International
Michael O'Sullivan, Chairman & CEO, The Humane Society of Canada
Grace Ge Gabriel, Asia Regional Director, International Fund for Animal Welfare
Kumi Togawa, President, Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund
Dr. Christoph Schmidt, Chair of the Board, Pro Wildlife
Thomas Toepfer, Chairman, Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V. / Save Africa's Elephants
Charlotte Nithart, Director, Robin des Bois
Trevor Jones, PhD, Director, Southern Tanzania Elephant Program
Airi Yamawaki and Dr. Asuka Takita, Co-Founders and Co-Directors, Tears of the African Elephant

CC: Jordi Cardoner i Casaus, FC Barcelona First Vice President
Carles Vilarrubí i Carrió, FC Barcelona Second Vice President
Jordi Mestre i Masdeu, FC Barcelona Third Vice President
Manel Arroyo, FC Barcelona Fourth Vice President