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Response to Elephant conservation and ivory sales – July 2017

Thank you for contacting me about the plight of the elephant and the ivory trade.

Like you, I am seriously concerned about the effect of illegal poaching and ivory trafficking on the long-term prospects for the survival of the elephant.

Just how seriously the Government takes this issue was demonstrated when it held the London Conference on Wildlife Trafficking. Over 40 countries adopted the London Declaration in an effort to save iconic species, including elephants, from being poached to the brink of extinction. The Buckingham Palace Declaration followed with a range of commitments to help the private sector tackle this illegal trade.

The UK made available £13 million for various projects including through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, and is now doubling that funding. It is also training rangers in Gabon, home of Africa's largest population of forest elephants, to combat poaching.

The UK employs strong rules to control the sale of unworked ivory, backed up by robust enforcement from Border Force and the National Wildlife Crime Unit. These go further than the requirements of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and EU law; for example, the UK will not issue certificates for the sale of raw African elephant ivory of any age. The Government is currently considering further action on worked ivory and will set this out in due course.

Ministers also recognise the growing threats to the Asian elephant from the illegal trade in live animals, fed by demand from the tourist and entertainment industries. The UK has been working through CITES to increase protections worldwide.

I hope to have reassured you that the UK is fully committed to protecting the elephant. Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP