

News story: Government sets out plans for ivory ban

The UK will impose a ban on ivory sales to help bring an end to the poaching of elephants, under plans announced by Environment Secretary Michael Gove today.

The proposals will protect elephants and help combat poaching by removing opportunities for criminals to trade illegally-poached ivory. Today's plans will be subject to a [12 week consultation](#) and cover items of all ages, not only those created after a certain date.

The number of elephants has declined by almost a third in the last decade and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered due to the global demand for ivory. If current rates of poaching continue, elephants could become extinct within decades in some African countries, meaning that future generations of children may only see these majestic creatures alive in zoos.

The decline of elephants would also deprive some of the poorest countries in the world of their valuable natural capital, affecting economic growth and sustainable development.

As profits become ever greater, the illegal wildlife trade has become a transnational organised enterprise, estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The decline in the elephant population fuelled by poaching for ivory shames our generation. The need for radical and robust action to protect one of the world's most iconic and treasured species is beyond dispute.

Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol – so we want to ban its sale.

These plans will put the UK front and centre of global efforts to end the insidious trade in ivory.

Stop Ivory's chief executive, John Stephenson, said:

Stop Ivory and its partners welcome today's action by the UK government. By starting the process to bring in a total ban on ivory sales in the UK, the government continues to work with the African countries leading the Elephant Protection Initiative to secure a meaningful future for elephants across Africa – the initiative the government helped launch at the London Conference on

Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014.

The unprecedented crisis we face – with Africa's natural heritage being destroyed and communities put at risk due to poaching by illegal armed gangs – will only stop when people stop buying ivory. Along with our partners, we congratulate the government on this important step and look forward to working with it and our colleagues to ensure the ban is implemented robustly and without delay.

In line with the approach taken by other countries, the government is proposing certain narrowly-defined and carefully-targeted exemptions for items which do not contribute to the poaching of elephants and where a ban would be unwarranted.

The consultation proposes four categories of exemptions:

- musical instruments;
- items containing only a small proportion of ivory, a de minimis exemption;
- items of significant historic, artistic or cultural value;
- and sales to and between museums

The government will work with conservationists, the arts and antiques sectors and other interested parties through the consultation period on exactly how these exemptions can be defined, implemented and enforced so as to ensure there is no room for loopholes which continue to fuel the poaching of elephants.

Current rules allow worked ivory items produced after 3 March 1947 to be sold with a certificate, with no restrictions at all on worked ivory produced before that date. The trade of raw ivory of any age is already prohibited. The existing regulations will be considerably strengthened through the new proposals.

This new ban will build on government work both at home and overseas to tackle poaching and the illegal ivory trade. The UK military trains an elite force of anti-poachers in African countries, and Border Force officers share their expertise in identifying smuggled ivory with counterparts worldwide to stop wildlife trafficking.

In October 2018, the UK will host a fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife, bringing global leaders to London to tackle the strategic challenges of the trade. This follows the ground breaking London 2014 conference on the illegal wildlife trade, and subsequent conferences in Botswana and Vietnam.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on 29 December.

Speech: The 12+ Adolescent Girls Empowerment Programme (2013-2017)

12+ girls are agents of change, picked as representatives in local and national fora to speak up for girls' rights at school and at community events.

12+ is an innovative and ambitious mentorship and safe-space programme, which aims to empower vulnerable 11 year old girls across Rwanda to become informed decision makers and to have more voice, choice and control over their lives. In a context where girls spend up to 12 hours per week on domestic work, including collection of water and firewood, in addition to their school work, and have few positive female role models to follow, the 12+ programme provides them with an opportunity to develop friendships, play games, learn new skills and build their self-esteem. The programme also teaches girls about safety, prevention of GBV and provides them with knowledge on sexual and reproductive health.

Over a ten month period, groups of 25 girls meet every weekend in safe spaces within their community, where they are guided by two mentors (female role models aged between 18-25) to take part in fun learning activities to cover a diverse curriculum of life skills. These include issues around sexual and reproductive health, financial literacy, gender based violence, nutrition and education, with learning in the safe spaces complemented by 'learning journeys' and visits to local banks, health centres, secondary schools and kitchen gardens.

The program has been managed by the Rwandan Ministry of Health and delivered by three implementing agencies (Imbuto Foundation, World Relief Rwanda and Caritas) across 133 sectors in all 30 districts of Rwanda. With funds from DFID (£6.36m), and with support from the Girl Effect and the Nike Foundation in quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation, the 12+ programme reached 12,000 girls during its initial year (2014-5); scaled up to 40,000 girls in this second year (2015-6), and reached a further 40,000 girls in this third and final year (2016-7). Plans are now underway to develop a second (five year) phase of the programme from 2018-2023, management of which will shift from Ministry of Health to Rwanda's Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion for this second phase.

Results so far are showing positive impacts on girls' self-esteem, confidence, knowledge and behavior. 12+ girls already acting as agents of change, are being picked as representatives in local and national fora, are speaking up for girls' rights at Umuganda, at school, at community events. Out-of-school girls are also seen to be returning to full time education. There is also evidence that parents are changing, participating in learning journeys, supporting 12+ graduates, forming parents' committees, savings

groups and friendship circles of their own. A two year evaluation is underway, which is gathering data from a control group as well as girls in the 12+ programme, and is measuring the extent to which the programme affects girls social, health and economic assets.

Press release: Royal Air Forces's Red Arrows thrill Karachi audiences

The airshow started at 02:00 pm on Sea View Road and was attended by the British High Commissioner, senior officials from the British Council and the Pakistan Air Force. The public of Karachi were also there in huge numbers to witness the joint airshow, which marks the first time the Red Arrows have performed a full display in Pakistan in 20 years.

The British Council also set up a pop up library at Sea View which included digital wall with a curated collection of e-books and an information booth.

peaking at the event, the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team's Supervisor, Squadron Leader Mike Ling, who is known as Red 10, said:

The strength of the UK-Pakistan relationship is highlighted by this joint airshow by the Red Arrows and the Pakistan Air Force's JF-17 Thunder aircraft. The visit by the Red Arrows this year is also historic as it marks 70 years of UK-Pakistan relations.

We are thankful to the officers and men of Pakistan's Southern Air Command for their generosity and support in hosting us for this visit".

Earlier on Thursday the Red Arrows visited Pakistan Air Force's Masroor Base where they were welcomed by senior officials from the Pakistan Air Force. The Pakistan Air Force and the British Council co-hosted this event. In addition to ministers and dignitaries, schoolchildren from the PAF Saleem Nawaz Fazaia College had the opportunity to interact and engage with the Red Arrow and JF-17 Thunder pilots.

Speaking at the event, the Country Director for the British Council in Pakistan Ms Rosemary Hilhorst OBE said:

The British Council is delighted to have such a strong partnership with the Pakistan Air Force in education supporting its schools and colleges.

Today is a very special day which represents the excellence of the

aerobatic teams, both the Red Arrows and the JF-17 Thunder display teams, and the strong relationship between the UK and Pakistan which has held steadfast these past 70 years.

With the message of 'Shared History, Shared Future', the British High Commission's 70th anniversary celebrations consist of a year-long series of activities and events that celebrate the strength of the UK-Pakistan relationship over the last 70 years. This year also marks 70 years of the British Council working in Pakistan, which it is celebrating through diverse activities and programming ranging from cultural festivals to alumni events.

Working in cooperation with the Government of Pakistan and the Pakistani High Commission in London, the celebrations seek to increase the bilateral trade, cultural and educational links between the two countries.

The Red Arrows are one of the world's premier aerobatic display teams. Flying British-built fast-jets, they have performed more than 4,800 times in 57 countries, showcasing the excellence of the Royal Air Force and representing the United Kingdom overseas. The team is carrying out a five-week tour of the Middle East supporting UK interests.

Contact

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More Information

For updates on the British High Commission's 70th Anniversary of UK – Pakistan relations and for more information on the Chevening Programme, please follow our social media channels:

Speech: “UN peacekeeping missions are not meant to stay the same. They are meant to evolve alongside the conditions on the ground”

Thank you Mr President and thank you Jean-Pierre, Marc-André and Masud for your briefings.

I want to begin by paying tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of the men and women of UN Peacekeeping. They represent the very best of this organisation. We owe it to them, and to those that they protect, to ensure that peacekeeping operations have the right capabilities for the mission at hand. That means the right people, with the right equipment and skills, carrying out the right mandate.

How often do we actually meet that standard? How often instead do we hear of peacekeeping operations having to rely on whichever forces are available, rather than on the forces best suited to the mission?

Our ultimate goal must be to give the UN the freedom to tailor the forces it deploys according to the unique circumstances of each mission's mandate. We've made a good start towards that goal, including at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London last year. But as our Canadian colleagues pick up the baton, it is clear that there is more to do. Let me outline three steps which we need to take.

First, we shouldn't be afraid to innovate. We know there are persistent gaps of niche capabilities, like attack helicopters, specialist engineering skills, medical skills. We shouldn't accept this as an unavoidable reality, but instead, we should look to countries to work together to rotate the provision of that scarce capability. This could mean one country providing those skills, while another supplies the supporting logistics, sharing the burden and increasing the availability of that niche asset. These innovative 'smart pledges' will be one of the issues that the British Defence Secretary will be raising in Vancouver.

Innovation also means incorporating modern technology to make peacekeeping more responsive and more effective. We've already made some progress on using unmanned aerial vehicles, but there are more technologies that we could be harnessing. To do so effectively, we need to be able to anticipate the future requirements of missions, and that brings me to my second point, Mr President.

Put simply, UN peacekeeping missions are not meant to stay the same. They are meant to evolve alongside the conditions on the ground. As a mission's objectives are achieved and as political processes progress, force requirements will also change. And we should be able to anticipate those changes and be agile enough to provide the capabilities required.

This means moving away from setting arbitrary troop ceilings and instead moving towards a tailored approach, that relies on better information on what capabilities are actually needed, and when, so that we are more focussed on the effect that we want the peacekeeping mission to deliver.

For example, next month we'll be discussing the MINUSCA mandate. Many here will no doubt advocate for an increase to the troop ceiling. But the UK is more concerned that the mission has the right troops. For us that means troops who are agile and mobile, willing and capable of moving to where they are needed at short notice.

We know that this approach works, we have seen it in action elsewhere. I'd like to praise MONUSCO and the Pakistani contingent there for their agility in relocating troops to hotspots where they're really needed for the protection of civilians.

To help us anticipate future force requirements, we need rich, real-time data from the UN to inform Council decision making. That analysis needs to be used also to inform force generation decisions. So we welcome the call in resolution 2378 for the collection and analysis of data on peacekeeping performance. It's a really important step forward; and let us all work with the UN to make it a reality.

My final point is that we can't lose sight of long-term planning and strategic force generation. This includes more partnerships, more training, more capacity building, so that we are moving beyond the immediate force generation, to future strategic force generation, so that we are preparing for future needs, not just filling the current capability gaps.

And as we do so, let us not forget that the military force is only one of the three pillars of a mission. As missions become more involved in political work, we will all need to think about how we generate the civilian component and the policing component so that missions can play an impactful role not just in keeping the peace, but in building and sustaining it too.

Thank you.

News story: The Home Office's consideration of children's 'best interests' – Call for evidence

The Chief Inspector requests evidence for his inspection on how the Home Office ensures it acts in the 'best interests' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) has begun work on an inspection into how the Home Office ensures it acts in the 'best interest' of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). This is the second in what is intended to be a series of inspections focused on the treatment of children within the context of borders, immigration and citizenship. The first report, published in July 2017, dealt with the [Home Office's application of the good character requirement in the case of young persons who apply for registration as British citizens](#).

This inspection will look at:

- the reception arrangements for the children, focusing on the support and information provided to the child, collation of information about the child, and referrals to other parties
- how the initial encounter and who that encounter is with affects the child
- the Home Office's role in carrying out age assessments (including initial age assessments), providing information and support to the child and how the Home Office works with local authorities in the case of age disputes
- the views of the Home Office and stakeholders about whether granting the UASC leave to remain is in the 'best interests' of the child, the impact of granting such leave, and the amount of information and support provided to children about it

The evidence gathering process has started and the inspectorate's established stakeholder groups will shortly be asked for their input. However, the ICIBI is keen to gather written evidence from anyone who has knowledge and experience of any of the above areas. Please write to

chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that this inspection will not examine:

- the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) – The ICIBI is separately inspecting the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, which uses comparable processes to identify vulnerable children in the Middle East
- asylum processes and the quality of decision making, which were covered in an inspection report that is awaiting publication
- the 'Dublin III' and 'Dubs' schemes, except where the latter is relevant to the National Transfer Scheme