

**Question for oral answer O-000059/2018  
to the Commission**

Rule 128

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on behalf of the ALDE Group

Subject: Closure of the EU ivory market to combat poaching

Illicit ivory trade has more than doubled since 2007. Poachers kill an estimated 55 elephants every day. Apart from the direct impact on the species and on ecosystems, poaching and trafficking undermine security, development, the rule of law and stability in the affected countries in Africa. Poaching is furthermore linked to corruption, organised crime, the financing of armed groups and murders of park rangers. The US, China, Hong Kong and the UK have already taken measures to close their domestic markets with only a few exceptions, which are much stricter than the ones currently in force within the EU. Wildlife protection groups, international organisations, scientists and authorities in African countries are calling on the EU to close its domestic market. A petition to put an end to ivory trade signed by more than 1.2 million citizens was transmitted to the Commission in March 2018. Parliament has repeatedly called for the closure of the European ivory market, while the Council has called for further measures to put a halt to the commercial trade in ivory. The Commission has launched a public consultation in order to determine whether stricter measures are needed.

1. Can the Commission guarantee that the existing legal domestic market for ivory in the EU does not contribute to poaching or illegal trade, particularly given the difficulty in distinguishing legal from illegal ivory? Does the Commission share the concern that legal trade stimulates demand and undermines enforcement efforts?
2. Does the Commission consider that there is a uniform interpretation and application by the Member States of the current EU legal provisions concerning intra-EU ivory trade and the export of ivory? If not, what further steps will it take?
3. How does the Commission plan to concretely implement the recommendations of the 2015 'Larger than Elephants' study undertaken for DG DEVCO, in particular the need to close domestic ivory markets and destroy any stockpiles of ivory, and will it earmark funding for this purpose?
4. Given the EU commitments on biodiversity conservation and in the light of the precautionary principle, does the Commission intend to close the EU ivory market? What other measures does the Commission intend to take to face up to the urgency of the problem and to encourage third states to close their ivory markets?

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