

The Honorable Seiko Hashimoto  
President  
Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

The Honorable Yuriko Koike  
Governor of Tokyo  
Secretarial Section, General Affairs Division, Office of the Governor for Policy Planning  
Tokyo Metropolitan Government  
8-1 Nishi-Shinjuku 2-chome  
Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 163-8001  
Japan

## Re: Tokyo Olympics and Elephant Ivory

Dear Ms. Hashimoto and Governor Koike:

Congratulations to Ms. Hashimoto on becoming President of the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee). We commend Governor Koike, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG), and the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee team for rising to meet the unprecedented challenges in managing the COVID-19 crisis and the postponement of Tokyo 2020. All eyes will soon be on Tokyo for the highly anticipated Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Humane Society International (HSI), and Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund (JTEF) have been working to protect elephants for decades. The evidence is clear: ivory trade is incompatible with the conservation of elephants. We are appealing for the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee to join the TMG and take action to prevent illegal trade and export of elephant ivory products.

African elephants have been decimated in an alarming number to supply the market demand for their ivory tusks. The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) recently listed the African forest elephant as Critically Endangered and raised the threat level of the African savannah elephant from Vulnerable to Endangered, as a result of population declines in recent decades due to poaching for ivory and habitat loss.<sup>1</sup> The most recent ivory seizure data released by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) shows that there was a marked increase in the total weight of ivory seized during 2019 compared to the previous three years.<sup>2</sup> Open ivory markets provide a cover for the illegal trade in ivory, stimulate demand and trade, and undermine enforcement and public awareness efforts. Many countries, including the United States and China, that previously had legal and regulated ivory markets have decided to close their domestic ivory markets<sup>3</sup> to protect elephants. The adoption of a recommendation by CITES in 2016 to urge countries to close domestic ivory markets contributing to poaching or illegal trade has prompted many other nations, including the United Kingdom, to take steps to prohibit the ivory trade. Most recently, the European Commission announced their intent to follow suit, leaving Japan as the last major legal ivory market still open. Tokyo is at the core of this ivory market, home to 18 percent of Japan's ivory businesses.

Tokyo needs to set a global example in light of international momentum to close down ivory markets to cease ivory sales. Numerous stakeholders, including African elephant range state nations, have appealed to Japan and Tokyo to close the domestic ivory market. In February 2021 we submitted a letter<sup>4</sup> to Governor Koike, supported by 26 Japanese and international non-government organizations, appealing for Tokyo's ivory market to be closed

<sup>1</sup> IUCN. March 25, 2021. African elephant species now Endangered and Critically Endangered - IUCN Red List. <https://www.iucn.org/news/species/202103/african-elephant-species-now-endangered-and-critically-endangered-iucn-red-list>

<sup>2</sup> CITES, ETIS and TRAFFIC. March 24, 2021. [https://cites.org/eng/ETIS\\_reports\\_record\\_ivory\\_seizures\\_2019\\_CITES\\_TRAFFIC\\_24032021](https://cites.org/eng/ETIS_reports_record_ivory_seizures_2019_CITES_TRAFFIC_24032021)

<sup>3</sup> The domestic ivory trade bans in these countries include narrow exemptions.

<sup>4</sup> EIA, HSI, JTEF, etc. (February 2021) <https://eia-global.org/reports/20210301-tokyo-urgent-measures-ivory-letter>

and recommending measures to implement urgently. Our recommendations include the declaration of Tokyo's intent to be "ivory free." Building on our recommendations to the TMG, we urge the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee to release a public statement supporting an "ivory free" policy, confirming there will be no ivory Olympics merchandise available, no official gift-giving of ivory products, and further committing to educate attending delegations, staff and volunteers, media, and any other attendees that exporting ivory is illegal.

Illegal exports of ivory from Japan are already a concern; ivory from Japan continuously makes its way abroad.<sup>5</sup> Even though no international spectators will be present, the athletes and delegation attendees alone, even with efforts to limit them, could still reach 90,000. The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee must still do its part and commit to being "ivory free," especially given the fact that Tokyo 2020 is among very few international events moving ahead in person this year, and that the international spotlight will be on the organizing committee and the Tokyo government.

Thus, we respectfully request that the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee releases a public statement confirming that no ivory products will be gifted or available as Olympics merchandise for purchase, and educate attending delegations that elephant ivory exports are illegal.

As Governor Koike has noted, Tokyo is an international city and, particularly as the host of Tokyo 2020, must set an example to make the world proud. We hope the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, will confirm a commitment to protecting the world's elephants from the trade in ivory.

Please contact our colleague Amy Zets Croke at [amyzets@eia-global.org](mailto:amyzets@eia-global.org) with any queries or comments. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Allan Thornton  
President | Environmental Investigation Agency US



Iris Ho  
Director, Wildlife Policy | Humane Society International



Masayuki Sakamoto  
Executive Director | Japan Tiger and Elephant Fund

CC: Michelle Lemaître, Head of Sustainability, International Olympic Committee  
Yusuke Hibino, Director of Sustainability Operations, Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee  
Yasuhiro Yamashita, President, Japanese Olympic Committee

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<sup>5</sup> EIA. Japan's Illegal Ivory Exports. <https://eia-global.org/japansillegalivoryexports>