



India Abstains to Vote Against Reopening Ivory Trade

Why in News?

Recently, India has decided not to vote against a proposal to re-open the international trade in ivory at the ongoing conference of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(CITES\)](#).

What is the Tussle over Ivory?

- The [ivory trade](#) was globally **banned in 1989** when all [African elephant](#) populations were put in **CITES Appendix I**.
- The African elephant of Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe were **transferred to Appendix II** in 1997 and South Africa's in 2000.
- CITES allowed Namibia, along with Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa, to **perform one-time sales of ivory** accumulated from natural elephant deaths and poacher seizures in 1999 and 2008.
- Following that, Namibia's proposal to enable a regular form of restricted ivory trade by delisting the elephant populations of the 4 nations from CITES Appendix II was rejected at the CoP17 (2016) and CoP18 (2019).
- Zimbabwe moved the **idea at CoP19**, but it was defeated once more.
- Namibia and other southern African governments say that their elephant populations have recovered and that their stored ivory can produce much-needed revenue for elephant conservation, if sold worldwide.
- Opponents of the trade argue **that every sort of supply increases demand**, and that substantial increases in elephant poaching were observed around the world when the CITES permitted one-time sales in 1999 and 2008.

What is India's Stance?

- India has been **a vocal opponent of the international ivory trade** for over three decades.
- It is the first time **India has not voted against a request to reopen** the ivory trade since joining the CITES in 1976.
 - At the same CoP19, Namibia voted against India's proposal to allow sustainable commercial use of North Indian rosewood - **Dalbergia sissoo**, which was also defeated.
- While the word **"ivory" was not mentioned**, Namibia sought India's backing, for its longstanding proposal to allow trade in ivory.

What are the Indian efforts to Ban Ivory Trade?

- The endangered [Asian elephant](#) was **included in CITES Appendix I in 1975**, which banned the export of ivory from the Asian range countries.
- In 1986, **India amended the [Wild Life \(Protection\) Act, 1972](#)** to ban even domestic sales of ivory. After the ivory trade was globally banned, India again amended the law to ban the import of African ivory in 1991.
- In 1981 when **New Delhi hosted CoP3**, India designed the iconic CITES logo in the form of an elephant. Over the years, India's stand has been unequivocal on the ivory issue.
- **1994 CoP9**: At Lauderdale, US, India opposed the down-listing of the elephant population of South Africa from Appendix I to II.

- **1997 CoP10:** At Harare, Zimbabwe, India opposed the proposal to down-list the southern African elephant and expresses concerns over the repercussions for the Asian elephant, particularly with regard to poaching.
- **2000 CoP11:** At Gigiri, Kenya, India moved a proposal along with the host country to up-list all elephant populations in **Appendix II to I**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which of the following statements is/are correct? (2015)

1. IUCN is an organ of the United Nations and CITES is an international agreement between governments.
2. IUCN runs thousands of field projects around the world to better manage natural environments.
3. CITES is legally binding on the States that have joined it, but this Convention does not take the place of national laws.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 only
- (b)** 2 and 3 only
- (c)** 1 and 3 only
- (d)** 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

[Source: IE](#)

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