



SURVIVAL CHARTER FOR THE ASIAN ELEPHANT

PREAMBLE

- Aware that the Asian elephant is facing the serious threat of extinction throughout its range in south and south-east Asia;
- Recognising that many range states have already devoted considerable human and financial resources to protecting their elephants in the natural habitat, but that despite these efforts, elephant numbers continue to decline;
- Recognising also that areas that support wild elephants also support a rich and varied biodiversity that is essential for maintaining the ecological services and life-support systems for local communities, including the protection of water catchments;
- Recognising also the role that natural forests play both in providing habitat for elephants and in sequestering atmospheric carbon as a buffer against climate change;
- Recognising further that the traditional tolerance of local communities for elephants has started to break down as a consequence of the escalating conflict between people and elephants;
- Accepting therefore that the future co-existence of elephants with people must be based on some form of geographic separation so as to minimise opportunities for contact between the two parties;
- Accepting also that people will show tolerance to their elephant neighbours only if their sacrifice is appreciated and recompensed through some form of economic benefit or financial compensation;
- Appreciating the special cultural, religious, and spiritual associations of the elephant with the people of Asia and its prominent role in the mythology and traditions of the region;
- Appreciating also that the outstanding significance of the Asian elephant transcends national boundaries and is of universal conservation importance to all people throughout the world;
- Accepting therefore that although leadership for ensuring the survival of the Asian elephant in the wild must lie with the range states, the universal significance of this iconic species places a responsibility on all governments across the world, especially OECD donor governments;

CALL FOR ACTION

We, the signatories of this charter and its associated petition, hereby call for the following actions with immediate effect to avert the imminent threat to the survival of the Asian elephant. This call for action is extended to governments, both of the elephant range states and throughout the world, and all relevant international organisations, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme, the global conservation and development sector, and other stakeholders with an interest in the survival of the Asian elephant:

1. To mobilise all available skills and expertise both within the government and non-government sectors to protect the Asian elephant and its habitat, and to encourage the co-existence of elephants and humans based on mutual toleration and respect;
2. To recognise the impact that elephants may have on the lives and livelihoods of local communities, taking whatever steps may be necessary to minimise this conflict;
3. To promote a world-wide campaign to save the Asian elephant from extinction in the wild, creating a substantial increase in public awareness and concern about the plight of the Asian elephant both in the range states and the Western world
4. To establish, where required, the necessary legal framework within each range state for the effective conservation of its national biodiversity, including the Asian elephant;

5. As appropriate, to agree to some or all of the following actions to be incorporated into national Elephant Action Plans:
 - a. To establish a network of protected areas, or to extend an existing network of protected areas, comprising areas of natural elephant habitat, each area large enough to support a biologically viable population of elephants. No permanent human settlement or agricultural cultivation will be allowed within these protected areas;
 - b. To ensure the effective management and patrolling of the protected areas through the provision of adequately paid, trained and motivated personnel;
 - c. To manage the habitat of the protected areas for the benefit of elephants and other biodiversity with minimal human disturbance;
 - d. To establish a buffer zone around each protected area within which low density human settlement will be permitted and where measures, as set out below, will be targeted to reduce the conflict between humans and elephants;
 - e. Where appropriate, to create wildlife corridors along old elephant migration routes to link protected areas, allowing for the passage of animals and for genetic mixing between populations;
 - f. To recognise and accept the impact that elephants may have on local communities by introducing the necessary measures specific to each area to reduce the human/elephant conflict within the buffer zones around each protected area. In extreme cases, such remedial measures may include the payment of financial compensation to villagers, the re-location of villagers, or an appropriate response to the problem of rogue animals;
 - g. To give priority for investment in economic and social development to the communities in the buffer zones around protected areas, and to link such investment directly with the effective conservation of the wild elephant populations;
 - h. To encourage the restoration of the traditional cultural and spiritual associations between people and elephants with annual festivals in the local villages to celebrate this association;
 - i. To promote sustainable, low intensity eco-tourism within the protected areas, where this is feasible, thus providing direct economic benefit to the local communities arising from the protection of their elephants through eco-tourism, and to create opportunities for employment by local people in the tourism industry;
 - j. To encourage the creation of an approach within the local communities that sees elephants as potential assets for the benefit of the communities rather than as an encumbrance;
6. To promote the free exchange of information and experience between range states, including the development of new technologies, population monitoring techniques, and training programmes to improve the effectiveness of approaches for the conservation of the Asian elephant;
7. To promote inter-disciplinary research, incorporating the relevant disciplines of both the biological and social sciences, that can contribute to the improvement of the elephant situation;
8. To coordinate the actions undertaken by governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals within each range state for the conservation of Asian elephants so as to generate a cohesive integrated conservation programme in accordance with the national Elephant Action Plan;
9. To coordinate bi-lateral governmental action between adjoining nations in those instances where a population of elephants extends over national boundaries; and
10. To urge countries throughout the world to ratify the relevant international conventions for the conservation of the Asian elephant and the elimination of the illegal trade in ivory.

CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS

Recognising that as much as one quarter of the total elephant population in Asia comprises animals held in captivity - although this proportion varies considerably between range states, and that as an absolute last resort, this captive population could provide a potentially valuable genetic resource for future conservation efforts (the priority for EF's funding will be conservation of wild populations) - the Charter calls for the following actions relating to the management of captive elephants:

1. To compile a register of the ownership of all captive elephants;
2. To ensure that all registered owners of captive elephants provide high standards of veterinary care and welfare through an annual inspection of their animals;
3. To cease the practice of wild elephant capture to replace captive animals that is a drain on wild populations.

CONCLUSION

The Asian elephant faces the imminent threat of extinction. However, outside the professional conservation movement, the world community is ignorant of this crisis. The purpose of this Survival Charter is to mobilise both public and political awareness through an international campaign to secure a viable future for the Asian elephant and the communities that co-exist with elephants.

The Asian elephant is an iconic species whose significance transcends national boundaries and regional politics. Its fate lies in the hands of governments throughout the world – they must act now before it is too late.

Elephant Family
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