



In May 2012 Sri Lanka Customs seized a shipment of 359 elephant tusks en route to Dubai. The tusks which had been poached in Kenya were from the slaughter of more than 150 African elephants, with mothers and young being slaughtered and orphaned babies left to die of starvation. The confiscated blood ivory lay in the custody of Sri Lanka Customs until January 2016, without a clear commitment by any Government authority to destroy it. The following timeline details how the Federation of Environmental Organisations, Sri Lanka (FEO), has advocated consistently and persistently from various angles to ensure that the blood ivory would be destroyed as per our international treaty obligations.

January 12th 2013: FEO initiates the campaign by posting on its website and circulating through social media a statement on the confiscated blood ivory, requesting that the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) to take appropriate measures to destroy it. The campaign was initiated based on the news that the blood ivory was be donated to local temples by the President. (Letter included)

February 2013: FEO hosts press conference with leading Sri Lankan scientists speaking out about the importance of destroying the blood ivory. (Related article included)

May 29th 2013: FEO submits letter to H.E.Mahinda Rajapakse, the then President of Sri Lanka, calling for the public destruction of the blood ivory. This letter was also published in the local newspapers. (Statement included)

The prevailing political and public security climate vis a vis the Mahinda Rajapakse government did not allow further public statements about the blood ivory. However, the perceived negative image of the blood ivory prevented it from being moved from the custody of Sri Lanka Customs (SLC).

October 2014: FEO submits letter to the President. The letter also appears in local newspapers.

March 2015: FEO and other environmental organizations publicly call for newly appointed President to destroy the blood ivory.

May 2015: FEO restarted its campaign to get the blood ivory destroyed after giving the newly appointed Government a few months to settle into their roles. The initial discussions were had on a personal level with the newly appointed Prime Minister, Deputy Minister of Wildlife, and FEO Chairperson at the time.

Briefing note on blood ivory were submitted to the following members of Parliament: Harsha de Silva, Eran Wickramaratne and Ruwan Wijewardena.

June 23rd 2015: With an introduction from the PM, FEO Trustees and Core group members met with the Minister of Finance, Mr.Ravi Karunanayake, educated him about the significance of the blood ivory and the importance for Sri Lanka to uphold its international treaty obligations (CITES). This resulted in the Ministry of Finance organizing a meeting for FEO with the Additional Director General of Customs Mr.Tilak Perera.

June 26th 2015: Mr.Tilak Perera assured FEO that SLC was committed to destroying the blood ivory and would take action after the general elections scheduled for August. A rumour had been

circulated amongst the Cabinet of Ministers that it would be bad luck to destroy ivory...It was at this time that the FEO raised the question of whether the blood ivory would be destroyed as per CITES guidelines.

August 2015: General elections

August 28th 2015: FEO handed over a proposal for a public ceremony to destroy the blood ivory, based on the events in Hong Kong and New York in 2014. FEO also handed over copies of the CITES ivory destruction guidelines.

September 2015: FEO persistently pursues Mr.Tilak Perera to discuss the blood ivory destruction event. Given the disinterest in meeting with FEO, other avenues were explored. A FEO core group member that had a good relationship with SLC in the past attempted to get an appointment with the Director General SLC.

FEO requests funding from Born Free Foundation for public ceremony to destroy the blood ivory. Born Free Foundation confirms funding based on conditions for proper accountability and inventorising of the blood ivory. This is used as a carrot to push SLC moving on planning the event.

September 29th 2015: FEO is informed that SLC is having an issue identifying a crusher that would cater to the crushing requirement of the ivory.

FEO contacts various organisations involved in the construction industry to determine if they would have crusher that is the equivalent of the crusher used in the New York crush, a Terex Pegson or Trakpactor 260 mobile crusher. After visits to several construction yards and companies (Access Projects, MAGA Engineering, ICC, Tudawe Brothers), FEO identifies a company that has this exact mobile crusher. This information is passed onto SLC.

FEO through the Born Free Foundation also collects information of what was done at the New York and Hong Kong crushes in terms of actual crushing and burning procedure.

The following were contacted in this regard:

- George Phocas, USFWS Attaché - S.E. Asia
- Sr. Special Agent, Office of Law Enforcement
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
- US Embassy Bangkok, Thailand

October 2015: FEO continues to try to get an appointment with the Director General SLC or Mr.Tilak Perera.

November 8th 2015: Mr.Tilak Perera retires from SLC. FEO directed to work with Mr.Liyanage, the head of the Central Investigation Agency of the SLC. (Letter included)

November 27th 2015: FEO meets with Mr.Liyanage of SLC. According to Mr.Liyanage, SLC required a response from Holcim Lanka, a cement manufacturing company that has the large kilns capable of burning material at temperatures in excess of 1500 Celsius to their letter of 13th October.

FEO tries to reach Holcim through senior executive contacts in social circles. As the CEO was overseas, this avenue was on hold. However, a junior executive known to a FEO member was convinced of the importance of getting the right feedback to SLC. She was able to connect FEO to the head of Holcim geocycle, the Department under whom this request came under. Once

informed of the importance of their position, they expedited their consideration of the SLC request. Their main concerns were to do with the size of the crushed ivory. FEO was able to give them the required information based on research done to determine the specifics of the New York and Hong Kong crushes.

December 2015: In the absence of any response from SLC to the information provided and lack of interest to follow up on the matter, FEO approached the Hon.Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe to support the required action.

December 15th 2015: Sri Lanka Customs through the Ministry of Finance instructed by the Prime Ministers office to work with FEO to crush the blood ivory and hold a competition to build a symbolic monument.

December 24th 2015: The Minister of Wildlife and Sustainable Development makes a public statement that the blood ivory will be publicly burnt on the 26th of January 2016.

December 28th 2015: The Ministry of Finance formally instructs the Director General of Customs to work with FEO to destroy the blood ivory.

January 2nd 2016: FEO approaches the Minister of Wildlife and Sustainable Development to share information related to the destruction of the blood ivory stock collected over the past months. FEO is invited to a meeting on the 5th of January 2016 at the Ministry.

January 5th 2016: FEO attends meeting and proposes that a professional event organiser be used to plan and execute the event as it would have to be of an international standard. The Minister had intended to coordinate the event through the Ministry using various State resources for the event.

January 6th 2016: FEO informs the Ministry in writing of the conditional funding offer from the Born Free Foundation through FEO. FEO requests a meeting with concerned parties to organise the event. The meeting is set for the 8th of January.

January 7th 2016: FEO is informed that their services are not required for the event as the Presidential Security Division will be organising the event.

January 26th 2016: The confiscated blood ivory is publicly destroyed on Galle face green by Sri Lanka Customs and the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife



AP Photo/Eranga Jayawardena, taken from <http://www.iflscience.com/environment/sri-lanka-destroys-its-stock-illegal-ivory-and-apologises-elephants>