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## Zambia lobbies hard for ivory sales

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- By: [Jeff Kapembwa](#) --

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**Lusaka** – Zambia is leading a push for African countries to obtain a CITES waiver that would allow them to legally export ivory stockpiles.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) has an international ban on trade and sale of ivory and related products.

Southern African countries have accrued huge stockpiles of ivory worth millions of dollars over the decades. The stockpiles mostly constitute ivory from elephants culled for conservation and ecological purposes.

With economies reeling from a tourism slump caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a renewed push to allow countries to legitimately trade their ivory.

Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe – in particular – are holding large amounts of ivory.

Zambia's Tourism Minister Ronald Chitotela last week said the limited permission to sell ivory domestically will not generate the kind of revenues that can be realised on international markets.

Minister Chitotela is also the Chairperson of the Commission for Africa (CAF), an agency that implements the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's general programme of work on the continent.

He said, "Trading ivory domestically is not worth it and as CAF president, I'm lobbying for a waiver on the ban."

Zambia has about 52 tonnes of ivory worth around US\$100 million, and would like to dispose of it.

Minister Chitotela said, "I have raised this matter at a high level meetings have seen the Secretary-General of UNWTO, various ambassadors from Britain and the US, among others and have I have put my case forward and with help from members of the (Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Area). We are pushing the matter."

Southern African countries in favour of regulated ivory exports point out that CITES' one-size-fits-all approach to the matter, which led to the universal ban, did not take into account individual states' peculiarities.

Zimbabwe, for instance, says it is sitting on ivory and rhino horn stocks worth US\$600 million, even as the country desperately tries to secure revenues to shore up a struggling economy.