

## **The man who saved the African elephants in 1980s congratulates the Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister.**

It is obvious that every elephant lover knowing Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton. Douglas-Hamilton pioneered the first in-depth scientific study of elephant social behavior in Tanzania's Lake Manyara National Park at age 23 in 1965. He was the first to alert the world about the ivory poaching massacre that was happening in Africa. In 1979, Douglas-Hamilton led a comprehensive ivory trade study for USFWS that provided a foundation for subsequent ivory trade monitoring. He chronicled how Africa's elephant population was halved between 1979 and 1989, and he was the first to alert the world to the poaching crisis and was instrumental in bringing about the world ivory trade ban. From 1980 to 1982 he developed and led a successful emergency anti-poaching program in Uganda's national parks, where elephants were on the brink of extinction. His work has led directly to the halt in the species' precipitous decline and to the subsequent stabilization of many elephant populations.

Douglas-Hamilton and his wife, Oria, have co-authored two award-winning books, "Among the Elephants" (1975) and "Battle for the Elephants" (1992) and have made numerous television films. Douglas-Hamilton has written a number of articles for scientific publications over the decades that have helped shape elephant protection efforts around the world. In 1993 he founded the charity/organisation "[Save the Elephants](#)" by having an intention of saving the elephants from ivory poaching and human-elephant conflict.

Douglas-Hamilton delivered a special letter to the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. He has been joined by many other African elephant conservationists. His letter says:

"I want to offer my congratulations to the government of Sri Lanka for the laudable decision to destroy ivory stocks. This action is particularly important this year as matters are coming to a head on the question of how many elephants can survive in the face of the intense exploitation we have seen in the last five years.

In 2014 Save the Elephants published research estimating that 100,000 elephants had been killed in Africa in the years 2010-2012. Essentially this rate of attrition has not significantly decreased in 2013, 2014 and 2015, although in some corners of Africa the anti-poaching efforts are proving effective. At risk are both elephants and African livelihoods.

With this stockpile destruction, Sri Lanka is joining the ranks of China, Ethiopia, Hong Kong SAR, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Thailand, UAE and USA in standing against

illegal trafficking in ivory, a trade which forms part of the USD\$19 billion illegal wildlife trade, the fourth most lucrative illicit trade in the world. This action is also in keeping with the principles of the Elephant Protection Initiative, an African-led initiative which calls the countries of the world to put ivory stockpiles beyond commercial use.

Asia has led the way in helping secure a future for elephants. In 2015 where we saw the astonishing declaration by China and the US to shut down their domestic markets, and a colossal drop in the price of ivory in China. Hong Kong has voted to ban the trade in the territory, a decision recently backed by their Chief Executive. And now Sri Lanka has set 2016 off to a good start with this ivory destruction.

Sri Lanka is sending a message to the world that ivory should be without worth; elephants have value when alive. This is a critical message to send particularly to the religious world, as they are sensitized about the threat religious ivory poses to elephant populations in Africa.

As we applaud Sri Lanka for the brave effort to help stop trafficking of ivory, we are mindful that human elephant conflict is a common threat we share both in African and Asian countries. Save the Elephants is pleased to be working with The Sri Lankan Wildlife Conservation Society to help create a tolerant relationship between man and elephants through research into Asian honey bees and whether they can serve as a mitigation measure against Asian elephants. This measure has been effective in Kenya, and we hope that it brings similar relief to the people of Sri Lanka.

I am heartened by the coalition that is building between African countries and Asia in securing a future for elephants. It is known that the ivory being destroyed passed through Kenya, a country that is shoring up its defenses to resist being a transit for the illicit trade. We also recognize that much of this ivory originated in Tanzania, a country that is now working to recover its vast elephant herds after an estimate of 65,000 were killed between 2009 and 2015. Sri Lanka's destruction of this ivory stands against this heedless destruction of the sentient beings I have studied for 50 years. There is urgent need for concerned individuals, scientists,

conservation organisations, businesses, actors and activists, politicians and governments themselves to join arms to take united international action to stop the killing, trafficking, and demand for ivory. We cannot waver in our efforts to deal a decisive final blow to the crisis facing elephants.”

His congratulatory message is joined by:

Kahindi Lekalhaile (*Director (public Affair Division) Africa Network for Animal Welfare*); Sveva Gallmann (*Executive Director, Laikipia Nature Conservancy*); Dr. Noah Sitati (*African Wildlife Foundation, Program Manager*); Dr. Phyllis C. Lee (*Director of Science, Amboseli Trust for Elephants*); Lisa Rolls (*Campaign Manager, Advocacy/Brand Building, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*); Annabella Francescon (*CEO, Maniago Safaris Ltd*); Benson Okita-Ouma, PhD., MBS (*Head of Monitoring at Save The Elephants*); Keith Lindsay (*Conservation Biologist and Natural Resource Consultant, Oxford, UK*); Cynthia Moss (*Director, Amboseli Trust for Elephants*); Saba Douglas-Hamilton (*Director, Elephant Watch Safaris*);

Tanya Saunders (*Executive Director, Tsavo Conservation Group*); Resson Kantai-Duff (*Head of Awareness at Save The Elephants*); Hon. Mr. Justice Nzioki Wa Makau (*Chairman-Co Founder Tsavo Trust Advisory Board Member, The Tsavo Conservation Group Judge of the Industrial Court of Kenya*); Dr. Henrik Barner Rasmussen (*Managing Director, Savannah Tracking Ltd*); Ian Redmond, OBE (*Ambassador for the UN Convention on Migratory Species*); Dr. Joyce Poole (*Co-Director Elephant Voices*); Alexander Rhodes (*CEO, Stop Ivory*) and Dr. Max Graham (*CEO Space for Giant*).