

The Canadian perspective on the control of elephant products under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Y. Lafleur

Environment Canada Enforcement Branch, Canada

CONTEXT

More liberal Trade

Since the creation of CITES international trade has change significantly. Time required to move shipments has been reduced and importers and exporters do not accept long delays to allow inspection at port of entry. The opening of large free trade agreements has reduce the need for customs presence.

Increase of volume of trade

Volume and types of products being transported from one country to the other has increased to reach a level impossible to physically inspect. In Canada, shipments can come via 276 ports of entry including airports, marine ports and road crossings.

TYPE OF CONTROL

CITES permit

The concept of CITES control based on a permit system has been designed in an era where the concept of the national border was very different than it is now. The permit was used for a limited number of easily recognizable species and with a limited number of annotations.

Border inspection

The main type of intervention expected to control the trade is the border inspection by

Customs Officers. In Canada the role of inspectors has changed over the years and the actual physical inspection is less than 5 % of the import and very limited at exportation.

Paper audit

Canada is presently experimenting the use of paper audit to identify potential smugglers. Customs auditors are reviewing for some products or importers all the paper work required for international trade and compare the declaration form, the tax form, the bill of lading, the invoice, the CITES and other permits. The initial results from a pilot project are amazing. For the products selected the rate of inaccuracy was extremely high. This type of analysis is time consuming and a good targeting is essential to be effective.

Intelligence

Intelligence analysis is the key to identify areas to be inspected and audited. It is a long and complex operation which, if well done, clearly define what is important and reduce significantly the efforts placed in areas of less concern.

ISSUES

Dealing with control of international trade in ivory and elephant products is more difficult than we can expect. It is particularly true since there is a ban on trade because most of the traffic has been driven underground. Among other the following issues are adding to the difficulty: Ivory is easy to conceal, HS codes allow ways

to not identify ivory, it is very difficult to identify ivory and fake products if they are in small pieces, presence of exemptions allowing some movement of ivory.

SOLUTIONS

There is no single solution to address all the issues and make the illegal trade under control. Some improvement could be done in:

- ensuring that HS codes are clearly showing the presence of ivory
- Increasing the exchange of intelligence on illegal trade through a formal working group and electronic communication
- more coordinated work to simplify identification of ivory products and fake ivory using Internet as a mean of communication
- creation, under the authority of the CITES Secretariat, of a chat line with limited access to officers involved in the control of elephant products.

