



March 24, 2016

Mr. Masayoshi Son
 Director, Yahoo! Japan Corporation
 Chairman, SoftBank Corp.
 Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, SoftBank Group Corp.
 Chairman of the Board, Sprint Corporation

Mr. Nikesh Arora
 Chairman of the Board of Directors, Yahoo! Japan Corporation
 President and Chief Operating Officer, SoftBank Group Corp.
 Chief Executive Officer, SB Group US, Inc.

Re: Request for SoftBank to End Yahoo! Japan's Elephant Ivory Advertisements and Sales

Dear Mr. Son and Mr. Arora,

We the undersigned 32 organizations, greatly respect SoftBank's commitment "[to protecting the earth for future generations](#)" and accordingly are writing to urge you to expeditiously end Yahoo! Japan's advertisement and sale of elephant ivory products. SoftBank, with its 43 percent share of Yahoo! Japan, is uniquely positioned to ensure that Yahoo! Japan acts in a socially and environmentally responsible manner and bans the advertisement and sale of all elephant products immediately.

Africa's elephants are in crisis, with the number lost to poaching exceeding 30,000 a year. It is estimated that more than 100,000 elephants were illegally killed between 2010 and 2012, and elephant populations in many regions of Africa are in a dangerous decline. Sadly, these majestic animals are killed to feed the demand for unnecessary ivory trinkets. If future generations have any hope of seeing African elephants in the wild, the threat of poaching for the ivory trade must be eliminated. We urge Yahoo! Japan and SoftBank to join the effort to protect elephants by putting a halt to all ivory sales, thus eliminating your roles in this deadly trade.

Trade in ivory products is currently legal in Japan; however, Japan's government has completely failed to control its domestic ivory trade.

According to Japanese law, cut pieces of ivory do not need to be registered with the government. It is common practice for illicit ivory traders to launder illegally-obtained whole ivory tusks onto the domestic market in Japan by cutting them into pieces. Furthermore, the whole tusk registration scheme in Japan is rife with fraud and abuse. Thus, it is impossible to verify the legality of any whole tusk sold, whether registered or not. Given the inherent weaknesses of Japanese law and the absence of government oversight over the trade, the responsible action for socially responsible and forward-looking companies like yours to take is to stop dealing in ivory all together.

Unfortunately, Yahoo! Japan's auction and online shopping sites are a major distribution channel for the sale of ivory in Japan, much of which is illegal. [Recent investigations](#) revealed that 93 percent of the more than 6,000 advertisements carried by Yahoo! Japan's shopping site on a single day in August 2015 were for ivory *hanko* name seals. Evidence shows that unregistered, and thus illegal, ivory tusks are regularly processed into ivory *hanko* name seals and sold on Yahoo! Japan's shopping website. On a single day, the sales value of ivory offered in the 6,000 ads on Yahoo! Japan Shopping was US\$2.6 million. On Yahoo! Japan Auctions, the value of "closing bids" for ivory products increased from US\$584,000 in 2005 to just under US\$7 million in 2014, with a total of \$27 million for the ten-year period. Between 2012 and 2014, over 800 whole tusks were sold on the auction site. The scale of ivory sales of dubious origin on Yahoo! Japan's shopping and auction sites is immense and growing.

While the Government of Japan currently permits trade in elephant ivory, many major companies and governments worldwide have adopted more progressive policies to ensure endangered and threatened species, like elephants, are protected from commercial trade in their products. For instance, leading internet retailers Google, Amazon.com, and Alibaba have banned ivory sales on all their sites globally, and Yahoo! Inc. in the United States does not permit sales of ivory products. In September 2015, President Obama and President Xi of China made a joint commitment to "[take significant and timely steps to halt the domestic commercial trade of ivory](#)." We hope Yahoo! Japan, and the Government of Japan, will join the ranks of corporations and nations dedicated to stopping the deadly ivory trade and protecting the world's elephants.

We urge you to help protect Africa's remaining elephants as an important expression of your commitment to protect the earth for future generations by immediately ending the advertisement and sale of elephant ivory on Yahoo! Japan's auction and shopping sites.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Muruthi, PhD, Vice President – Species Conservation, African Wildlife Foundation (AWF)

Takashi Kitamura, Director, All Life In a Viable Environment (ALIVE)

Shannon Elizabeth, Founder & President, Animal Avengers

Jan Creamer, President, Animal Defenders International (ADI)

Susan Millward, Executive Director, Animal Welfare Institute (AWI)

Adam M. Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Born Free Foundation (BFF)

Adam M. Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Born Free USA (BFUSA)

Sarah Uhlemann, International Program Director, Center for Biological Diversity (CBD)

Francis Garrard, Director, Conservation Action Trust

Luc Mathot, Director, Conservation Justice

Ofir Drori, Founding Director, Eco Activists for Governance & Law Enforcement (EAGLE)

Andrea Costa, Executive Director, Elephant Action League (EAL)
Joyce Poole, PhD, Director Conservation & Research; Petter Granli, President & CEO, ElephantVoices
Allan Thornton, President, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
Iris Ho, Program Manager - Wildlife, Humane Society International (HSI)
Azzedine Downes, President & CEO, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
Masayuki Sakamoto, Executive Director, Japan Tiger & Elephant Fund (JTEF)
Ofir Drori, Last Great Ape Organisation (LAGA)
Allison Thomson, Director, Outraged South African Citizens Against Rhino Poaching (OSCAP)
Perrine Odier, Interim Coordinator, Projet d'Appui à l'Application de la Loi Faunique (PALF)
Catherine Doyle, Director of Science, Research & Advocacy, Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS)
Dr. Christoph Schmidt, Chair of the Board, Pro Wildlife
Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia
Dr. Trevor Jones, Director, Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP)
Angela Sheldrick, Chief Executive Officer, The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT)
Sally Case, Chief Executive Officer, The David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation
Michael O'Sullivan, Chairman & CEO, The Humane Society of Canada
Kaori Sakamoto, Representative, Voice for Zoo Animals, Japan
Peter Knights, Executive Director, WildAid
Julie Sherman, Executive Director, Wildlife Impact
Belinda Wright, Executive Director, Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI)
Priscilla Ma, Executive Director, World Animal Protection

For more information, please contact the Environmental Investigation Agency at info@eia-global.org or (202) 483-6621.

