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STATEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS ON THE ROLE OF CAPTIVE FACILITIES IN IN SITU AFRICAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

The IUCN Species Survival Commission African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) membership, at its general meeting in Burkina Faso in January 1998, debated the role played by captive facilities in the conservation of the African elephant.

The Group agreed on the following:

The Statement

- The AfESG recognizes there is some role for captive facilities in the conservation of African elephants, through the fields of public education, scientific research, development of technologies, professional training and direct support to the conservation of the species in the field.
- The AfESG also recognizes the role that some zoos and zoological societies play in mobilizing public support for funding these activities.
- However, the AfESG is concerned by the poor breeding success and low life expectancy of captive African elephants and does not see any contribution to the effective conservation of the species through captive breeding per se.
- Where African elephants are held in captivity, the AfESG believes that special care should be accorded to their physical and psychological well being.
- The AfESG encourages captive facilities to maintain and expand field programmes directed to African elephant populations in African range states, but wishes to point out that the holding of African elephants by a captive facility is not a necessary precursor for involvement for *in situ* African elephant conservation.

The Resolutions

1. Regarding the question of what action the Chair of the AfESG should take when asked by captive facilities in importing countries to issue a letter on behalf of the AfESG to their CITES Management Authorities endorsing the importation of live African elephants from the wild, the Group agreed by consensus that this should not be done.
2. The Group also decided that there should be no formal linkages between the AfESG and the AZA, but there could be continued dialogue regarding prioritization of their input into field research and conservation programmes in the field, as well as improving the content of their public awareness and education programmes, as and where necessary.