

CITES**Controlled Resumption of Ivory Trade**

The decision in 1997 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to authorise Zimbabwe, Namibia and subsequently Botswana to resume exports of ivory solely to Japan, was confirmed on 11 February 1999, by the Convention's Standing Committee.

The controlled export, on an experimental basis, is subject to certain conditions and to strict monitoring.

It was argued in Harare that elephant populations in the three countries are not threatened with extinction, and they proposed that profits from a limited trade might be ploughed back into programmes to conserve the species elsewhere.

Namibia will now be authorised to export 13.8 tonnes of ivory to Japan and Zimbabwe 20 tonnes in a single shipment after 18 March. Further verification has still to be completed before similar authorisation can be extended to Botswana. Experts believe that the sale of a large quantity of ivory will contribute to breaking the parallel market in illegal ivory which has begun once more to expand over recent years.

The CITES Standing Committee has also approved a new system for managing elephant populations and monitoring poaching across all of Africa and south-east Asia. Christened MIKE, this system has been developed by experts with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). □