



EAZA Statement on the import of Namibian wild elephants to the United Arab Emirates

Amsterdam, 10 March 2022: The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) has learned of the import of wild caught elephants to zoos in the United Arab Emirates, including EAZA Member Al Ain Zoo. EAZA has been consistently and firmly against this import and the EAZA Ex situ Programme (EEP) for African elephants opposes the inclusion of the elephants from this import into the EEP population. EAZA is reviewing the appropriate disciplinary measures, reflecting on the factual situation and the seriousness of the breach of procedures.

EAZA takes its responsibility to avoid the import of wild caught animals extremely seriously. While it is true that in some situations moving of wild caught animals into zoos or aquariums can make a difference to the long term survival chances of a species, we have been clear that no such justification exists for African elephant at present, and that the goals of the African elephant EEP can be enhanced without recourse to such imports. We are therefore very disappointed by the decision of Al Ain to disregard our injunctions on this matter.

The EAZA Elephant Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) who oversees the African elephant EEP has repeatedly and clearly informed Al Ain that no import of wild caught elephants was either necessary or desirable. The TAG also made clear that any such import by an EAZA Member would be in violation of our advice, and EAZA rules and procedures. EAZA is concerned by the extreme lack of transparency related to the import both from the side of the importing facilities as well as from the authorities of the exporting and importing countries. EAZA will be examining the extent of the breaches of our regulations by the zoo to determine the sanctions that will be imposed on the zoo. The outcome of these deliberations will be shared with Members following our standard procedures.