UK Government Urged: Foreign Aid Cash Must Be Used to Lead the Charge Against Elephant Poaching

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MPs and charities are calling on the UK government to divert Foreign Aid money into helping fight wildlife crime like elephant poaching.

An innovative Early Day Motion (EDM) has been tabled by Zac Goldsmith MP, asking the government to make a ‘substantial and strategically important contribution’ towards the protection of elephants across Africa.

Wildlife charity Care for the Wild International, which has run anti-poaching projects in Kenya for many years, helped draft the EDM, and is urging MPs and the government to debate the issue in Parliament.

Philip Mansbridge, CEO of Care for the Wild, said:

"The world is gradually waking up to the dire situation in Africa, but now we need the British government to pick this up and push Europe forward.

“A hundred years ago over 12 million elephants roamed Africa. Today only 350,000 remain and at the current rate of loss to poachers most of these could be gone in the next few years. The UK has a key role to play in leading international action to stop elephant poaching in Africa, but we must act now.”

Zac Goldsmith (Cons), MP for Richmond Park and North Kingston, said: “We are seeing an unimaginable tragedy unfold in Africa. Elephants are being killed at a rate that will render them extinct in the wild in only a few years, and all for the sake of a few trinkets. But it’s not just a conservation issue; ivory funds terrorist groups, including the notorious Al Shabab, and it is in our interest to turn the tap off fast. The Foreign office is showing leadership, but it’s time now to ramp things up considerably.”

In May this year, Care for the Wild revealed that the cost of saving the elephants would be just 7p per person among the population of the G8 nations, which has a combined foreign aid budget of around $90 billion a year. Since then, the G8 has committed to take action on the issue, Prince Charles and Prince William have shown their support, the US has set up a Wildlife Crime Taskforce, and has also destroyed its own stockpile of ivory.

Philip Mansbridge added: “We spend over 12 billion a year in the UK on international aid and it's now time we used some of these funds to help African nations protect their elephants from ivory poachers

“People may think that foreign aid money should only be used to help people – but this is exactly what this money will do. Stopping ivory poaching is not only about protecting the future of elephants but also the people of Africa. The illegal ivory trade is hugely damaging to the economies of countries such as Kenya which rely on wildlife tourism, and it also feeds instability, terrorism and conflicts across the continent.

“I call on all MPs to support this EDM and look forward to the Foreign Secretary joining a debate in Parliament on this issue, ahead of the high level International Wildlife Crime Summit in London in February.”

Care for the Wild International is a charity based in Horsham which aims to Rescue, Protect and Defend wildlife around the world. To find out more, see http://www.careforthewild.com

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