



Jane Goodall, one of the world's greatest conservationists, has made an impassioned plea for a worldwide ban on the sale of ivory to prevent the extinction of the African elephant.

Her call follows the seizure in Malaysia last week of 24 tonnes of illegal ivory and a report by conservationists warning that the illegal ivory trade now threatens governments as rebel groups use the sale of tusks to fund their wars.

"A massive tragedy is unfolding in some parts of Africa. This is desperately serious, unprecedented," she said. "We believe that Tanzania has lost half its elephants in the last three years. Ugandan military planes have been seen over the Democratic Republic of the Congo shooting elephants from the air. Armed militia are now shooting the elephants."

She accused China of being ultimately responsible, because most of the ivory is sent there to be made into ornaments. "The main market is China and the east. The ivory appears to be smuggled out in the Chinese diplomatic pouches or in unmarked planes, or it is smuggled over the border to DR Congo. Armed gangs and rangers are joining in the smuggling or are getting killed. I fear we are losing the battle in some countries. It's shocking," she said.

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