

The Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Ordinance 2018

Frequently Asked Questions

Antique Ivory

According to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants (Amendment) Ordinance 2018 (“the Amendment Ordinance”), import, re-export and local possession of all elephant ivory (thereafter referred as “ivory”) for commercial purposes have been banned since 1 August 2018, unless the ivory can meet the requirements of antique ivory exception.¹ This document aims to provide information on relevant measures and matters of antique ivory for reference. For the relevant statutory requirements, the provisions of the Amendment Ordinance shall prevail over this document.

1. What is an antique ivory?

As defined in the Amendment Ordinance, an antique ivory means as a piece of ivory that was, before 1 July 1925—

- (i) removed from the wild;
- (ii) significantly altered from its natural state for jewellery, adornment, art, utility or musical instruments; and
- (iii) acquired by a person after the alteration in such altered state that required no further carving, crafting or processing to effect its purpose; and does not include an elephant hunting trophy.

2. What is an antique ivory exception?

To protect elephants, Hong Kong has adopted a three-step plan which bans the import and re-export of ivory and elephant hunting trophy and phases out the local trade in ivory. However, as a measure to protect cultural relics, antique ivory is excepted from the plan. Antique ivory can be imported, re-exported or possessed for commercial purposes provided that it can be proven antique and all the statutory requirements are met.

¹ The Amendment Ordinance amends the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance to, *inter alia*, take forward a three-step ivory phase-out plan. For more information, please see circular letter no. ES 02/18 dated 9 March 2018.

3. How do I prove that an ivory is an antique ivory?

The person claiming the benefit of the antique ivory exception must prove to the satisfaction of the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (hereafter referred to as “the Director”) that the ivory meets the definition of antique ivory (see (1)). The burden of proof is on that person.

Examples of acceptable proof of antique may include a qualified appraisal or other method that documents the age of the ivory by establishing the provenance of the ivory. The provenance may be determined through a detailed history of the ivory, including but not limited to family photos, ethnographic fieldwork, or other information that authenticates the article and assigns the work to a known period of time or, where possible, to a known artist. Results of tests using scientifically approved aging methods carried out by an accredited laboratory or facility, local or overseas, are also acceptable.

Notarized statements or affidavits by the person or a CITES² pre-Convention certificate alone are not necessarily adequate proof that the ivory meets the antique ivory exception.

4. What will the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) accept as a qualified appraisal?

An appraisal submitted as documentary evidence of an ivory’s eligibility under the antique ivory exception must meet the following criteria:

- The person executing the appraisal either has earned an appraisal designation from a recognized professional appraiser organization for demonstrated competency in appraising the type of property being appraised, or can demonstrate verifiable education and experience in assessing the type of property being appraised.
- The person executing the appraisal is not the importer, exporter, buyer, recipient, or seller of the ivory and does not benefit from the results of the appraisal (other than for the cost of the appraisal); is not a party to any of the transactions associated with the ivory (including any person acting as an agent for the

² The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

transaction); is not an employee of any business that is a party to the transaction; and is not related to the person claiming the exception.

- The facts that AFCD will examine in determining the reliability of the appraisal include but are not limited to the followings:
 - A description of the ivory that is detailed enough for a person who is not generally familiar with the type of ivory to determine that the appraisal is about the ivory in question.
 - The name and address of the qualified appraiser, or if the appraiser is a partner, an employee, or an independent contractor engaged by a person other than the person claiming the exception, the name and address of the partnership or the person who employs or engages the appraiser.
 - The qualifications of the appraiser who signs the appraisal, including the background, experience, education, and any membership in professional appraiser associations.
 - The date on which the ivory was appraised.
 - The scientific, or other, method in detail used to determine the age and species.
 - Descriptive information on the ivory, including but not limited to: the size of the ivory, the medium, the artist or culture, approximate date the ivory was created, and a professional quality image of the ivory.
 - A detailed history of the ivory, including proof of authenticity.
 - The facts on which the appraisal was based including analyses of similar works by the artist on or around the creation date.

5. How can I import/ re-export antique ivory into/ out of Hong Kong?

To import an antique ivory, a Pre-Convention Certificate issued by the previous exporting place and a Licence to Import (IL) issued by AFCD are required. Re-export of an antique ivory requires a Licence to Re-export (RL) issued by AFCD.³ Antique ivory must be inspected by an authorized officer upon arrival in Hong Kong or before departure.

6. Can I sell antique ivory in Hong Kong?

³ The application method for IL/ RL for antique ivory is at Annex II to circular letter no. ES 02/18 dated 9 March 2018.

Possession of antique ivory for commercial purposes is allowed and does not require a Licence to Possess (PL) provided that the ivory can be proven to meet the requirements for antique exception.⁴

Please note that the term “commercial purposes” does not restrict to sale only but it has a broader meaning. "Commercial purposes" means—

- (a) a purpose relating to trade or business; or
 - (b) a purpose of obtaining profit or other economic benefit (whether in cash or in kind) and directed towards sale, resale, exchange, provision of a service or other form of economic use or benefit, whether direct or indirect,
- and "non-commercial purposes" shall be construed accordingly.

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
August 2018

⁴ A person may possess an antique ivory if he proves to the satisfaction of the Director—

- (a) that he possesses a pre-Convention certificate in respect of the antique ivory;
- (b) that the antique ivory was imported before 6 August 1976; or
- (c) if the antique ivory was imported on or after that date, the import was not in contravention of any provision of the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance (Cap. 187) (repealed) or the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586), whichever was in force at that time.