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# ECHO OF THE ELEPHANTS: THE NEXT GENERATION\*

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\* This was a film presentation.

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## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF THE US ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT ON ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

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### ABSTRACT

The African elephant is only one of 277 foreign mammalian species listed in the United States (US) Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973: The ESA is the principal legal conservation instrument in the US, but it is of special significance to all elephant range states in which sport-hunting of elephants supports community conservation and development programmes. It is through the ESA mechanism that the US allows or disallows the import of sport-hunted elephant trophies and thus controls the most lucrative foreign market for elephant hunting in the world: Several range states have been concerned for years about: the lack of transparency surrounding the implementation of the ESA, overlaps and contradictions with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and flora, as well as the moral justification for the inclusion of foreign species in the domestic legislation of the US.

The US Congress began the process of re-authorising the ESA in 1994: This process creates

opportunities for amendments or for the adoption of entirely new bills: The subsequent debate surrounding the ESA has led to major controversies and divisions within the US, reflecting philosophical and socio-economic differences between the western states dependent on natural resources and the urbanised and industrialised eastern states: The parallel with the usual “developed versus developing country” split on a global scale is obvious: The debate should be of considerable interest to other parts of the world, particularly where the example of the US approach to conservation is followed. There is an astounding depth of dissatisfaction within the US about the consequences of the ESA in terms of the erosion of property rights, the role of federal government, and the growing dissatisfaction with the financial, economic and social cost of species protection: The question of the impact of the ESA on foreign conservation programmes has been asked by southern African countries, where there is concern about the continuous threat posed by the ESA to the long-term future of community conservation programmes and to the principle of sustainable development: