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# SESSION TITLE: NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL ISSUES OF CONCERN

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## CAPITAL CITY ARTISAN MARKETS IN AFRICA AND THEIR IMPACT ON ELEPHANTS: A CASE STUDY FROM THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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### ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in the Marché de Plateau in Brazzaville, Congo, which is the largest artisans' retail market-place for wood, stone, metal and ivory in the Congo. Three data sets were collected during the study.

1) Four retailers were monitored over a one-year period from September 1994 - September 1995, with totals of over 300 observation days per retailer. Data were collected on every client that passed the stand of the retailers, and included the purchases, the prices paid, the buyer's nationality and occupation. 2) A taxonomy was developed for all ivory items sold in the market. A large sample size of weights was obtained for each taxonomic type. 3) A complete inventory of the ivory sold and its quantity was made monthly throughout the market. Results showed that citizens of at least 60 nations purchased ivory during the study period and tons of ivory are sold at this market annually. Nationals of France, Senegal, Congo and the ex-Soviet States (mostly Russia) were particularly frequent clients. Based on the quantity per client, and through interviews, it is evident that most French purchase ivory either as gifts or for personal use. The three other major purchasers are wholesalers who hand-carry items to Europe and West Africa for sale, or ship their merchandise through the diplomatic pouch. There is evidence that the level of ivory sold in the Plateau market has increased significantly in the past three years. There has been an accompanying increase in the level of poaching of elephants in Congo.

### SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION COMPILED FROM RAPPORTEUR NOTES

The idea for this study arose from conversations with Tom Milliken about the carving of ivory in central and west African markets and the impact of this trade market on elephant populations.

A very open tourist trade exists in all the central and west African capital cities. However, this trade has never been quantified and is largely uncontrolled. After the (CITES) ban there was a drop in sales of ivory but there has been a dramatic increase in the last two years.

In order to find out how much ivory was being sold, two assistants, posing as students, monitored the trade of four ivory sellers (they each monitored two) in the main Brazzaville market. They worked with the sellers for one year (365 data days) to monitor the amount of ivory being moved and to whom it was being sold. They documented every piece of ivory which they saw being sold.

A total of 1,178 people bought 683kg of ivory. The majority of buyers were from the neighbouring African states, for re-sale, followed by tourists from Europe, Asia and the Middle East. North Africans (especially Algerians) bought the largest average weight of ivory per client, while the French constituted the biggest number of clients, buying a total of 322 pieces.

The origin of the ivory was not discovered but the volume is significant when all markets in the region are considered. The author asks "what happened to the ivory ban?".