



NEWS RELEASE

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**Chad burns 1.1 ton ivory stockpile at Zakouma National Park's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
and bestows accolades on African Parks**



*Clockwise from top left: President Déby Itno (in white cap) sets alight the ivory stockpile; 1.1 tons of ivory go up in flames; Zakouma park manager Rian Labuschagne and his deputy Babakar Matar Breme after receiving their medals; Rian Labuschagne's l'Ordre d'Officier medal; stacking the ivory in preparation for the burn.  
Photographs: AFP/Marco Longari and Lorna Labuschagne.*

President Idriss Deby Itno marked Zakouma National Park's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Friday by setting Chad's 1.1 ton ivory stockpile alight before bestowing the country's highest civilian honours, *Les Ordres Nationaux du Tchad*, on Zakouma park manager Rian Labuschagne and his deputy Babakar Matar Breme for distinguished service to the country.

Rian Labuschagne was awarded *l'Ordre d'Officier* and Babakar Matar Breme *l'Ordre de Chevalier* in acknowledgement of their conservation achievements at Zakouma under African Parks. African Parks' country director Gilles Desesquelles, former head of the European Union in Chad, was awarded *l'Ordre des Commandeurs* for his pivotal role in facilitating the partnership between the Chadian Government and African Parks. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event also saw the President unveil a monument in memory of the 23 Zakouma guards who have been slain on duty since 1998.

During his speech, President Déby Itno acknowledged the merits of the public-private partnership entered into with African Parks in 2010. He said: "It is a good example of the co-operation to be followed for the management of other protected areas."

The destruction of Chad's ivory stockpile marks President Deby's firm commitment to combatting the rampant poaching that has decimated the country's elephant population. The ivory burn came in the wake of the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade on 13 February at which President Déby and four other African Heads of State pledged support for the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI). The EPI commits to a range of elephant protection measures including a commitment to cease trading in ivory products for at least 10 years. Its implementing organisation, Stop Ivory, was represented at the Zakouma ivory burn and has made \$2-million available to support the pledge, with the UK Government committing with another \$2 million.

Last year African Parks assisted Chad in launching the country's National Elephant Protection Plan. African Parks assisted with the satellite collaring of individuals in seven of the country's remaining herds, with the satellite signals relayed real-time to a national control centre in Ndjamen. The training of a dedicated 350 guard unit and the establishment of a national toll-free number to enable communities to report poaching threats form part of the protection plan.

Since assuming management of Zakouma in late 2010, African Parks has successfully arrested the poaching onslaught on the park's elephants. Not a single elephant has been lost to poaching in Zakouma during the past two years, whilst 21 elephant calves were born late last year - a testimony to the success of the park's anti-poaching initiatives.