

Dear UN Member States

Summit on Biodiversity – End the Global Commercial Trade in Wild Animals to Protect Biodiversity and Ensure Sustainable Development

Opening

The undersigned organisations, including World Animal Protection, Humane Society International extend their compliments and would like to draw your attention to the upcoming Summit on Biodiversity and the urgent need to address a key threat to biodiversity: the global commercial trade in wildlife. We are calling for a phase out leading to a global ban on cross-border wildlife trade, which would be a big step towards achieving the vision for the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Platform, namely for humanity to truly live in harmony with nature.

Set up

An alarming number of wild animals have been incorporated into the commodification of nature¹. The driving force responsible for this global phenomenon is consumer demand, and the commercial forces that promote and supply it². Today, an increasing number of the global population of seven billion people are consuming wild animals.

The exploitation of wildlife has occurred throughout human history, leading to biodiversity loss and extinctions. However, we are now at a turning point where humans have exploited such a large quantity of wildlife over the past 50 years that the rate of biodiversity loss has accelerated sharply and to an industrial scale that is no longer sustainable for wildlife and our planet³.

The most overexploited species include marine fish, invertebrates, tropical vertebrates hunted for bushmeat, and species harvested for the medicinal and pet trade⁴. However, other consumer demand also extends to the use of wildlife as entertainment, luxury fashion and food⁵. Furthermore, all of the individual animals involved will have suffered, to at least some degree, during capture, captive breeding, transport and subsequent use⁵.

Ask

We call on UN Member States to champion the protection of wild animals and their welfare as an essential element of the global effort to improve the health and sustainability of our global ecosystem during the Summit on Biodiversity, and seek to promote urgent action in this regard, including ending cross-border commercial trade of wildlife with a focus on the trade and sale of live wild animals, their meat and derivatives that

are reared or kept in close confinement or multi-species close contact environments (e.g. wildlife markets, farms or ranches).

Rationale

Throughout the 21st century, a predominant approach adopted by environmental conservationists has been belief that sustainable use of wildlife is necessary to prevent biodiversity loss and aid human development⁶. The hope being that commodification and commercialisation enables nature to pay for its continued existence, whilst bringing benefits – both financial and social – particularly to those living in close proximity to wild populations⁷.

Any deviation from viewing the commodification of nature as a vital conservation approach is often dubbed as either neo-colonial or naïve. However, wildlife is a finite resource and the current global industrial scale of its commodification, aided by increasingly powerful technology and exacerbated by growing consumer demand is resulting in habitat and species loss⁴ (on a par with the five previous known mass extinction events), and significant pressure on an exponentially dwindling and limited resource already subject to numerous other pressures, most notably climate change⁸.

In addition to the negative impacts for biodiversity conservation, the other unintended impacts of our commodification of nature are increasingly becoming clear. In terms of animal welfare⁵ and animal sentience, global understanding, attitudes and ethical standards are evolving to the extent that the negative impact on the lives of animals exploited commercially is becoming increasingly socially and culturally unacceptable. The movement to increase protection for animals is ever growing, from the outcry to the killing of [Cecil the lion](#) in 2015 to over 700K supporters having already signed [the World Animal Protection global petition](#) to end the wildlife trade and [HSI's petition](#) urging governments worldwide to permanently ban the trade, transport, and consumption of wildlife – now is a time for real change.

Furthermore, the negative public health and linked economic impacts associated with the commercial exploitation of wildlife are also becoming painfully clear^{9,10}. COVID-19, a zoonotic disease with devastating consequences in terms of loss of human life, physical and mental health, the global economy, livelihoods and the quality of public life, is reported to be hitting low-income communities hardest¹¹⁻¹⁴. Pandemics have occurred throughout history but are increasing in frequency, particularly because of the increasing emergence of viral

disease from animals¹⁵, a phenomenon being fuelled by the commodification of wildlife¹⁶.

To clarify, the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which include a focus on poverty alleviation, food security, and health are enduringly vital and must be pursued. However, given that the direct exploitation of wildlife has been identified as one of the dominant drivers of biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, and environmental injustice³, we believe that the concept of sustainable use as default approach to protect people and wildlife is in urgent need of re-evaluation.

It is crucial and timely for UN Member States to consider addressing the cross-border commercial trade of wildlife as an urgent action to protect biodiversity and achieve sustainable development. Target 4 of the first draft of the Global Biodiversity Framework (as developed by the Co-chairs following the debate during the second meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group) specifies, "harvesting, trade and use of wild species of fauna must be 'safe'". A critical first step to ensuring this safety is phasing out with the goal of ending the cross-border commercial trade and consumption of live wild animals, their meat and derivatives that are reared or kept in close confinement or multi-species close contact environments (e.g. wildlife markets, farms or ranches).

A recent UN Secretary General [report](#), highlighted that "robust and comprehensive environmental policies addressing priority trans-boundary issues may prevent and mitigate future pandemics, simultaneously banning trade of wildlife (which would contribute to preventing health risks), harmonizing sanitary standards and addressing the interacting threats due to illegal trade, habitat loss, climate change, and different sources of pollution by developing collaborative policy frameworks."

Moreover, in the recently released [note](#) by the Executive Secretary on the linkages between the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development it is recommended that "the Global Biodiversity Framework could further build on SDG target 15.c by including the issue of support for local communities who participate in poaching, expanding this to include all livelihoods that involve the use of wild species, allowing them to transition to sustainable livelihoods." This further acknowledges the growing consensus that ending wildlife trade must extend beyond poaching and trafficking in order to truly arrest biodiversity loss and restore our ecosystem.

Finally, in the Ministerial Declaration agreed at the recent 2020 High Level Political Forum all UN Member States recommitted "to protecting wildlife and other living species". Taking action to end cross-border

trade in wildlife will be an effective first step towards delivering on this commitment.

In summary, action to protect wild animals and their welfare is crucial to address the dominant drivers of biodiversity loss, create a healthy planet for healthy people and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We therefore call on global leaders to champion the protection of animals and animal welfare as an essential element of the global effort to improve the health and sustainability of our global ecosystem during the Summit on Biodiversity, and seek to promote urgent action in this regard, including a commitment to end the global wildlife trade.

Closing/Offer of engagement

We very much hope that UN Member States will consider the importance of acknowledging the relevance of wild animals and their welfare to sustainability and biodiversity and promote concomitant action in this regard during the upcoming Summit on Biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,

50x40 Coalition
Action for Primates
Africa Man and Biosphere
Africa Network for Animal Welfare
ALA Animals Latino América
Alliance for Earth, Life, Liberty & Advocacy
Ananta Jyoti Dhayn Kendra
Andhra Pradesh Goshala Federation
Animal Aid
Animal Aid Unlimited
Animal Defenders International
Animal Friends Croatia
Animal Interfaith Alliance
Animal Law Reform South Africa
Animal Projects & Environmental Education Sdn Bhd (APE Malaysia)
Animal Protection Agency
Animal Protection and Environmental Sanctuary
Animal Sanctuary Trust Indonesia
Animal Welfare Institute
Animals Asia
Animals Australia
Animaltalk Africa
AWARE: Animal Welfare Awareness, Research and Education
Badger Trust
Bali Animal Welfare Association
Beauty Without Cruelty South Africa

Best Friends Animal Society
Blood Lions
Borneo Futures
Borneo Nature Foundation International
British Columbia SPCA
Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting
Catholic Concern for Animals
Center for Biological Diversity
Change for Animals Foundation
Chelui4lions
Coalition of Africa Animal Welfare organisations
Community Dog Welfare Kopan
Compassion in World Farming
Compassion Unlimited Plus Action
Compassion Works International
Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation
David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
Elephanatics
FAADA (Fundación para el Asesoramiento y Acción en Defensa de los Animales)
Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO)
Fish Welfare Initiative
Foundation for Advice and Action in the Defence of Animals (FAADA)
Four Paws International
Fraternité pour le respect animal
Friendicoes SECA
Future for Elephants
Global March for Elephants and Rhinos
Global Youth Biodiversity Network – GYBN Kenya
Global Youth Biodiversity Network – GYBN Nigeria
Himalayan Animal Rescue Trust
Hollow Paws
Humane Research Australia
Humane Society International
HUTAN - Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme
In Defence of Animals, India
International Animal Rescue
International Organization for Animal Protection (OIPA)
Jane Goodall Institute – Nepal
Japan Anti-Vivisection Association
Japan Wildlife Conservation Society
Karuna Society for Animals & Nature
Korea Animal Rights Advocates
Lady Freethinker
Lawyers for Animal Protection in Africa
League Against Cruel Sports
Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection

Marine Connection
Melbourne Dolphin
National Park Rescue
Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC)
Naturewatch Foundation
Neotropical Primate Conservation
OceanCare
Oceanic Preservation Society (OPS)
One World Actors Animal Rescues
OneKind
Orangutan Appeal UK
Orangutan Foundation
OSCAP – Outraged SA Citizens Against Rhino Poaching
Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA)
Panthera
People for Animals, Odisha
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
People's Trust for Endangered Species
Performing Animal Welfare Society
Pro Natura Foundation
Pro Wildlife
Quaker Concern for Animals
Réseau Associatif pour la Protection Animale et le Développement
Durable (RAPAD Maroc)
RSPCA Australia
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia)
Sheldrick Wildlife Trust
Sinergia Animal
Sneha's Care
Society for the Protection of Animals Ljubimci
Soi Dog Foundation
Stripes and Green Earth Foundation
Sumatran Orangutan Society
Taiwan SPCA 台灣防止虐待動物協會
The Brooke
The Donkey Sanctuary
Unexpected Wildlife Refuge
Voice of Animal Nepal
Voice4Lions
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Wild Futures
Wild Welfare
Wildlife Alliance
Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Association, ARCAS, Guatemala
Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre
Wildlife SOS
World Animal Net
World Animal Protection

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