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Mr. Thanya Netithammakun
 Director General of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation
 61 Phol Yothin Road
 Ladyao, Chatuchak,
 Bangkok 10900

26 February 2018

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of the undersigned organisations, we are writing to urge you to revoke a zoo licence that has been issued to Golden Tiger (Thailand) Co. Ltd in Kanchanaburi, formerly known as the Tiger Temple Co. Ltd, an offshoot entity from the Tiger Temple. The business and persons responsible for this facility have been repeatedly implicated in illegal trade in tigers, a globally endangered species and a protected species in Thailand. Accordingly, we urge you to take steps to ensure those involved are penalised and that Thailand takes new measures to ensure tigers across the country are not bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.

The Tiger Temple has been implicated in illegal trade in tigers and tiger parts on multiple occasions since 2001. In 2008, a series of investigations uncovered international illegal trade from the Tiger Temple to a tiger farm in Laos. In 2014, allegations emerged about the illegal killing and disappearance of several tigers from the temple. Then in June 2016, the carcasses of 70 tiger cubs, two tiger skins and over 1,000 amulets made with tiger skin were discovered during a raid on the facility, after which the remaining tigers were confiscated.

Despite such trade in captive tigers being in clear violation of Thailand's Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act, no charges or prosecutions have been brought against the Tiger Temple and its management to date.

Such trade from and through captive facilities sustains and stimulates demand for tiger and other big cat products, which is driving poaching of wild tigers in Thailand and across their Asian range, and of big cat species globally. It is therefore with serious concern that we have learned that the Golden Tiger (Thailand) Co. Ltd has been granted a zoo licence and is set to re-open in March 2018 with 24 other tigers moved from Mallika Tiger Zoo.

The issuing of a zoo licence for a business that has been repeatedly implicated in illegal tiger trade represents a total failure to bring consequences upon those engaged in illegal wildlife trade, sending a message that wildlife crime is a high-profit, low-risk activity. This perception is fuelling wildlife crime globally, and is leading to the decimation of ecosystems worldwide.

Moreover, we are concerned that this incident is indicative of a failure to tackle the commercial breeding of tigers for trade in Thailand, in clear non-compliance with international commitments. In 2007, the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which Thailand is Party, agreed upon Decision 14.69, which states:

"Parties with intensive operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale shall implement measures to restrict the captive population to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers; tigers should not be bred for trade in their parts and derivatives."

There are now an estimated 1,450-2,500 tigers kept in around 50 facilities in Thailand; this number has more than doubled since 2007. Several of these facilities have been implicated in illegal trade. 350 tigers suspected to derive from captive sources have been seized in 36 incidents in Thailand since 2007.

The discovery of 12 tigers from a property in Chonburi on 2 February 2018, in association with the seizure of three dead tigers in Laos on 12 January, has once again demonstrated how commercial breeding of tigers in Thailand is escalating out of control and is contributing to illegal trade across the region. This incident also indicates that many other facilities unknown to authorities could be keeping and breeding tigers for commercial purposes. While we commend the enforcement efforts that led to this recent raid, it is crucial that such efforts result in prosecutions with deterrent sentences.

Fewer than 4,000 wild tigers survive worldwide, and poaching for trade continues to threaten their existence. To combat this threat, the demand for tigers, including from captive sources, must be eliminated. As an essential aspect of such efforts, those responsible for illegal tiger trade must face serious consequences.

Accordingly, we urge you to reconsider the granting of a zoo licence to the Golden Tiger (Thailand) Co. Ltd as a matter of urgency, and instead to focus efforts on bringing those responsible for illegal wildlife trade to justice.

Taking strong action to demonstrate how seriously Thailand is treating wildlife crime and illegal trade in captive tigers will encourage and catalyse global action to phase out tiger farms. We stand ready to advise the Thai Government in phasing out commercial tiger breeding facilities, and encourage authorities to consider working with experienced operators of legitimate sanctuaries to look after confiscated tigers through a management agreement. In the immediate term, we urge the Thai Government to end any further breeding of tigers occurring outside recognised regional tiger management programmes, as such breeding serves no conservation benefit.

Yours sincerely,

AAP Animal Advocacy and Protection - Raquel Garcia-van der Walle, Head of Public Policy
Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation - Ericka Ceballos
Animal Defenders International - Jan Creamer, President
Animals Asia Foundation - Jill Robinson MBE, Founder and CEO
Big Cat Rescue- Carole Baskin, CEO
Born Free Foundation- Will Travers OBE, President
Born Free USA - Prashant Khetan, CEO
CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society - Ericka Ceballos, President
The Corbett Foundation - Kedar Gore, Director
David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation - Karen Botha, CEO
Education for Nature Vietnam - Dung Nguyen, Vice-Director

EMS Foundation - Michele Pickover, Director
Environmental Investigation Agency - Debbie Banks, Campaign Leader, Tigers and Wildlife Crime
Four Paws International - Dominique van Asperan
The Fund for the Tiger - Brian K. Weirum, Chairman
Humane Society International - Theresa Telecky, Vice President, Wildlife
Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) - Ed Stewart, President and Co-Founder
Pro Wildlife - Daniela Freyer, Co-Founder
Sanctuary Nature Foundation – Bittu Sahgal, Founder
Save Wild Tigers - Simon Clinton, Founder and CEO
Species Survival Network – Ann Michels, Executive Director
WildCats Conservation Alliance - Esther Conway
Wildlife Conservation Trust - Dr. Anish Andheria, President
Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand - Edwin Wiek, Founder and Director
Wildlife Protection Society of India - Belinda Wright OBE, Executive Director
World Animal Net - Jessica Bridgers, Executive Director
World Animal Protection - Peter Mason, Interim Thailand Country Director
Zoocheck - Rod Laidlaw, CBiol MRSB Director