



27 non-governmental organisations call for further amendment of the Wildlife Protection Law of the People's Republic of China to prohibit commercial exploitation of threatened wild animal species

18 November 2020

Dear members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress,

The undersigned, comprising 27 wildlife conservation organisations from around the world, call upon China's National People Congress to take a crucial step in reducing demand for threatened wildlife by further amending the Wildlife Protection Law of the People's Republic of China to prohibit any commercial exploitation of threatened wild animal species.

The biodiversity crisis threatens the life support systems upon which we all depend, and is increasing the risk of future pandemics. Governments must take strong action now to prevent runaway ecosystem collapse, including tackling illegal and unsustainable trade which is a major driver of the crisis. As the host of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD CoP15) in 2021 it is crucial that China demonstrate leadership in these efforts.

We commend the Chinese Government's decision in early 2020 to amend the Wildlife Protection Law in recognition of the biodiversity and public health risks of commercial trade in wild animals. We are encouraged by proposed amendments contained in the revision draft published in late October 2020 which would prohibit consumption of wild animals as food and improve enforcement of laws to protect wildlife. However, we are very disappointed that the revised Law would still permit commercial breeding and trade of threatened and protected wild animal species for non-food purposes such as traditional medicine and ornamental items.

We are concerned that species whose body parts are currently traded legally in China, including pangolins, leopards, tiger, bears and elephants, are seriously threatened by high levels of poaching and trafficking; China moreover represents a major source of demand for these species. In maintaining legal domestic markets in these and other species, Chinese Government policy is acting contrary to the urgent need to reduce demand and is instead legitimising consumption. We note also that legal trade mechanisms in threatened wildlife are frequently subject to abuse, enabling laundering of illegally sourced wild animal products onto legal markets.

We are also concerned that for species which are threatened by trade, legal trade in captive-bred specimens frequently exacerbates threats to wild populations by stimulating demand, complicating law enforcement and providing opportunities for laundering of illegally sourced specimens.

In addition, we are concerned that permitting commercial breeding, trade and consumption of wild animals for traditional medicine and other purposes while strictly prohibiting consumption as food could undermine commendable policy changes aimed at reducing disease risk from wildlife trade.

Many of us come from and work in countries where tigers and leopards still survive in the wild, and we are battling every day to protect our big cats from poachers who supply illegal trade. We urge you to support our efforts by prohibiting trade in threatened wild animals such as tigers and other Asian big cats, elephants, pangolins, bears and rhinos, including from captive sources. This would also bring China's legislation into compliance with key decisions and recommendations adopted by the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

We therefore urge members of China's National People's Congress to make further amendments to the Wildlife Protection Law to, at a minimum, **prohibit domestic commercial trade in the parts and derivatives of threatened wild animal species, including from captive sources; extend prohibitions on trade and consumption of wild animals as food to other forms of consumption, including traditional medicine; prohibit captive breeding of threatened species for commercial purposes; and prohibit auction of seized specimens of threatened wild animal species.**

We believe that a failure to adopt these amendments would represent a grave missed opportunity to take much-needed action to reduce illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade. This would moreover risk undermining both China's leadership in biodiversity conservation as the host of CBD CoP15 and the commendable ambition displayed in other elements of the revised Wildlife Protection Law.

Animal Defenders International

Born Free Foundation

Center for Biological Diversity

The Corbett Foundation

Defenders of Wildlife

Education for Nature – Vietnam

Environmental Investigation Agency

Global Law Alliance for Animals and the Environment

International Aid for Animals Foundation

Oceanic Preservation Society

Pro Wildlife

Shark Research Institute

Wildlife Conservation Trust (India)

WildTiger

Big Cat Rescue

CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society

Centre for Wildlife Studies

David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation

Earth League International

Elephant Reintegration Trust

Fauna & Flora International

Humane Society International

International Primate Protection League

Pan African Sanctuary Alliance

Sanctuary Nature Foundation

WildCrime

Wildlife Protection Society of India