



Correspondent: Sonul Badiani-Hammett, external affairs advisor, World Animal Protection UK

Email: SonulBadiani-Hammett@worldanimalprotection.org.uk

Joint open letter to:

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

29 June 2020

Re: Back a wildlife trade ban at the G20 to help prevent a future zoonotic pandemic

Dear Prime Minister,

We acknowledge and thank you for the work you and your government have undertaken to contain and combat the pandemic spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). We extend our sympathies and solidarity with you on the enormous toll that the crisis has taken on our country.

The demand for wild animals and wild animal products is a primary cause of the emergence and spread of zoonotic diseases and a severe risk to world health. Covid-19, like other zoonotic infectious diseases including SARS, Ebola and MERS, is believed to have passed from wildlife to humans.¹

With your global leadership, we must ensure a zoonotic pandemic like this never occurs again. Therefore, we are calling on you to lead the G20 to end the international trade in wild animals and wild animal products, asking global institutions and bodies to put in place mechanisms to develop, facilitate and implement this ban.²

The impact of COVID-19 has been utterly devastating in terms of loss of human life, physical and mental health, the global economy, livelihoods and the quality of public life and cannot be underestimated. At the time of writing, COVID-19 has led to 7,271,569 confirmed cases and 412,007 deaths across more than 200 countries and territories.³

¹ Kuiken et al., 2005; Wang and Cramer, 2014} www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989418302312#bib53

² In our call for a global wildlife trade ban we refer to wild animals that are involved in non-essential global commercial trade (e.g. for use as luxury goods, exotic pets, traditional medicine and entertainment) that have been bred in captivity or captured from the wild. We do not include plants, fisheries that supply the food industry, wild animals hunted by communities for subsistence, or other wildlife trade that is deemed essential for human survival.

³ Updated on 10 June 2020, John Hopkins University & Medicine Coronavirus Resource Center <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>

worldanimalprotection.org.uk

5th Floor, 222 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8HB T: +44 (0)20 7239 0500
F: +44 (0)20 7239 0653 E: hello@worldanimalprotection.org.uk

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According to calculations by the UN and others, the COVID-19 pandemic could cost the global economy between US \$1-2.7 trillion and is triggering a global recession, forcing countries to introduce costly stimulus packages.⁴ Compare this with the value of the global wildlife trade estimated at US \$7-23 billion a year⁵ and it is clear that the costs to the international community and governments of fighting a global pandemic are vastly higher than the costs of preventing it in the first place.

Coming back stronger means that we need to tackle the causes of this public health crisis, avoid the inaction following pandemics such as SARS and make meaningful and coordinated international interventions to help prevent future outbreaks of emerging zoonotic diseases.

The G20 meeting of global leaders in November will be a key moment, with COVID-19 at the top of the agenda, and we ask you to champion a global wildlife trade ban, not only to end the senseless cruelty inflicted on billions of animals caught up in this cruel system but, to protect fragile ecosystems, the health of your citizens and the global environment we live in.

We are keen to work with you and your government on this urgent call and would be delighted to meet with you to discuss the asks of World Animal Protection and the Campaign to End Wildlife Trade coalition members, and share with you our wealth of knowledge, research and expertise on wildlife trade and the risks that it poses to public health. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance in your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Sonul Badiani-Hammett
External affairs advisor, World Animal Protection UK
E: SonulBadiani-Hammett@worldanimalprotection.org.uk

High-profile individuals

Alesha Dixon
Alison Steadman
Ben Goldsmith
Dame Judi Dench
Evanna Lynch
Gillian Burke
Gordon Buchanan
Leona Lewis
Liz Bonnin

Mark Carwardine
Michaela Strachan
Paul O Grady
Peter Tatchell
Ricky Gervais
Simon Reeve
Sue Perkins
Vanessa-Mae

⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Coronavirus: Can policymakers avert a trillion-dollar crisis? 9 March 2020: <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2300>

⁵ Nellemann, C., Henriksen, R., et al. The Environmental Crisis – Threats to sustainable development from illegal exploitation and trade in wildlife and forest resources. UNEP. 2014

Campaign to End Wildlife Trade Coalition Members

Action for Primates
Animal Aid
Animal Defenders International
Animal Interfaith Alliance
Animal Protection Agency
Badger Trust
Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting
Catholic Concern for Animals
Compassion in World Farming
Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation
Cruelty Free International
Four Paws UK
League Against Cruel Sports
Naturewatch Foundation
OneKind
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
People's Trust for Endangered Species
Quaker Concern for Animals
The Donkey Sanctuary
Voice4Lions
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Wild Futures
World Animal Protection
World Cetacean Alliance