



Joint NGO Statement on Tigers for the Honorable President Hu Jintao's 2006 Visit to India

Wild tiger populations are recovering in a few places, but most are in steep decline. Tigers now occupy 40 percent less habitat than they did 10 years ago and only 7 percent of their historic range.

There are many threats to the survival of wild tigers, including habitat destruction, prey loss and conversion of forests to agriculture. One of the most insidious threats is poaching to supply the illegal trade in tiger bones for health tonics and skins for decorative uses. The deadly results have been underscored by the total loss of tiger populations in places such as India's Sariska Tiger Reserve.

At this time, law enforcement efforts are insufficient to stop the illicit trade in tiger skins, and China's great strides in reducing consumption of tiger bone for medicinal purposes are threatened by calls to reopen trade in medicinal tonics produced on tiger farms.

In 1993, to support international efforts to stop illegal trade in tiger products and assist other tiger range countries in saving their wild tiger populations, China issued a legal notice banning domestic trade in tiger bone. We, the undersigned organizations, applaud that law and encourage China to redouble its efforts to enforce this exemplary ban. Any reopening of trade in tiger products, even on a limited basis, would open a floodgate of consumption in the world's fastest-growing economy. The status of the tiger in the wild is now so precarious that any additional poaching pressure could jeopardize remaining tiger populations by rendering law enforcement impossible.

Many renowned tiger specialists, economists and conservationists believe reopening of trade in tiger products of *any* scope under *any* regulatory scheme and from *any* source, including farms, will accelerate the decline of wild tiger populations, within China and throughout their range. Simply put, tiger farming will create incentives to poach and opportunities for increased illegal trade in parts and derivatives of wild tigers.

Trade bans *can* work, if they are effectively enforced and implemented. The global ban on ivory trade offers proof. The recovery of wild tiger populations such as those in the Russian Far East would not have been possible without existing international and domestic bans on tiger trade, especially China's.

Tiger bones are *not* necessary for human health. There are effective alternatives in plentiful supply, and the World Federation of Chinese Medicine Societies stands firm on this point. Tiger skins also are *not* needed for preserving ethnic cultural traditions. Again, alternatives are accepted and readily available.

On the occasion of the Honorable President Hu Jintao's visit to India, the undersigned organizations wish to urge that current bans on trade in tigers and their parts, both international and domestic, be strictly maintained, as specified by Resolution Conf. 12.5 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). To allow *any* trade from *any* source under *any* circumstance at this point in time would mark a further step towards the extinction of wild tigers.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." May the greatness of China and India as world powers be reflected in their shared commitment to secure a future for healthy people, a healthy planet and for tigers in the wild.

**American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
Conservation International
Environmental Investigation Agency
Humane Society International
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Save The Tiger Fund**

**TRAFFIC International
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Trust of India
Wildlife Protection Society of India
World Society for the Protection of Animals
WWF**