

20<sup>th</sup> September 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500  
USA



**Re: Why tigers belong on the U.S.-China agenda**

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned, write to respectfully ask you to raise the issue of tiger trade with President Xi Jinping during his visit to the United States in September 2015.

We congratulate you on your leadership in the global fight against the poaching and trafficking crisis that is sweeping across Africa, threatening the survival of an estimated 420,000 elephants and 25,000 rhinos. Given that there are fewer than 3,200 wild tigers remaining across Asia, we appeal to you to ensure that they too urgently receive the highest levels of political and financial investment to end the demand that is making them worth more dead than alive.

One of the most critical threats to the survival of wild tigers is trade in their meat, skin and bones to satisfy demand driven by wealth, rather than health – for high-status food, drink, home décor and even investment assets. This demand is fuelled by a marked increase in tiger farms in China, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand, where tigers are intensively bred for trade in their parts and products. China alone claims to house more than 5,000 tigers on farms.

China is the main consumer market for tiger parts and products, and China's State Forestry Administration has grown demand by supporting the expansion of tiger farms, allowing legal trade in skins from farmed tigers and approving farm wineries that make tiger-bone wine. Those actions have stimulated consumer interest in tiger products from *all* sources, undermining law enforcement, incentivizing poaching, and facilitating trafficking by organized criminal networks. Tiger-farm investors continue to push hard for full legalization of trade in tiger bones – the very trade China banned in 1993 because it threatened the survival of wild tigers. If trade were legalized, it would unleash a devastating demand that could quickly wipe out the last wild tigers, as the bones of wild tigers are far more valuable than those from captive tigers.

In order to ensure that tiger conservation remains a priority for the international community and to end tiger farming and tiger trade, we appeal to you to raise these issues with President Xi when he is your guest in Washington.

We also request the United States to take the following steps to compel China to take vital action:

1. Destroy all stockpiles of tiger parts and products and ensure deceased captive-bred tigers are incinerated so their parts cannot enter the black market;
2. Review the current certification of China under the [Pelly Amendment to the Fisherman's Act](#) and urge China to phase out tiger farms, as per Decision 14.69

of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);

3. Encourage introduction and adoption of the Big Cats and Public Safety Act, so that the keeping and breeding of the more than 5,000 captive tigers in the United States can be phased down to include only the small number needed by legitimate zoos and conservation breeding programs, to set an example of best practice;
4. Ask China and Laos to address the trafficking and sale of tiger parts and products, ivory, rhino horn and other endangered species in and through Laos by Chinese and Laotian nationals; and
5. Encourage adoption of legislation that increases the capacity of the United States to assist in the international effort to combat illegal wildlife trade, ensuring that tigers are emphasized, along with elephants, rhinos and other species.

Zero poaching of tigers can only be achieved when there is zero demand. Therefore, we ask you to continue your leadership in tackling illegal wildlife trade by seeking an end to tiger farming in Asia and the keeping of thousands of unregistered captive tigers in the United States.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Most respectfully,

Carole Baskin, Big Cat Rescue  
Adam Roberts, Born Free USA and Born Free Foundation  
Debi Goenka, Conservation Action Trust  
Kedar Gore, The Corbett Foundation  
Sally Case, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation  
Debbie Banks, Environmental Investigation Agency  
Iris Ho, Humane Society International / The Humane Society of the United States  
Sean Carnell, National Tigers For Tigers Coalition  
Kishore Rithe, Satpuda Foundation  
Simon Clinton, Save Wild Tigers  
Harshwardhan Dhanwatey, Tiger Research and Conservation Trust  
Vicky Flynn, TigerTime  
Belinda Wright, Wildlife Protection Society of India  
Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa

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