



26 January 2018

The Honourable Mr Nguyễn Xuân Phúc  
 Prime Minister  
 Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
 Office of the State  
 1 Bach Thao  
 Hanoi

Dear Honourable Mr Nguyễn Xuân Phúc,

On behalf of the undersigned organisations, we are writing to congratulate you on your government's commitment to tackle wildlife trafficking. This has been demonstrated by the landmark investigation and enforcement effort that has led to the upcoming first-instance trial of Nguyen Mau Chien and his associates Nguyen Van Tung, Nguyen Mau Thuan and Le Thi Hong. Nguyen Mau Chien is a key player in a network suspected of engaging in illegal trade in tigers and other wildlife on a global scale.

Nguyen Mau Chien has operated a captive tiger facility in Thanh Hoa province since 2006, when he sourced around 16 tigers that were allegedly obtained illegally. NGO inspections in December 2017 revealed that there were 11 tigers at the facility, which is located in a hub for production of bone 'glue', one of the key products driving demand for tigers in Vietnam.

The following events are grounds for suspicion that Chien has conducted illegal tiger trade through this facility. The stripe patterns and ages observed in tigers currently present at the facility indicate that they are different individuals from the original founder tigers. Two dead tigers were found in a freezer at the facility in 2010, and Chien is allegedly connected to a number of subsequent seizures of frozen tigers. We are seriously concerned that such illegal trade from and through captive facilities sustains and stimulates demand for tiger and other big cat products, which is driving poaching of wild tigers across their Asian range and of big cat species globally.

Moreover, Chien and his network have long been suspected of engaging in cross-continental illegal wildlife trade, dating back to at least 2007, when Chien was arrested and fined in Tanzania for wildlife trade offences. Chien was suspected to be the owner of large shipments of ivory, rhino horn and pangolin scales seized in major Vietnamese ports in 2015 and 2016, and his network is suspected to be linked to multiple criminal cases in Africa.

Nguyen Mau Chien was arrested in May 2017 by Unit 2 of the Anti-Smuggling Police Department in cooperation with Hoan Kiem and Ha Dong District Police, following extensive monitoring of the operations of the network. A large amount of wildlife contraband was seized from Chien's home, including rhino horn, two tiger carcasses (that Chien confirmed originated in his facility) and a large number of elephant ivory items.

The arrest of Nguyen Mau Chien and his associates represents the first step in the disruption of a criminal network of global importance, and notably the successful capture of an alleged senior figure within the network. The commendable enforcement efforts underpinning these arrests have demonstrated Vietnam's commitment to tackling illegal trade in tigers and other wildlife. If such efforts result in meaningful prosecution and sentencing it will also highlight progress made by Vietnam in implementing its international commitments, particularly under the National Ivory Action Plans of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and under the successive Illegal Wildlife Trade conferences held in London, Kasane and Hanoi.

Applauding these successful arrests, we will be following proceedings with interest. We do hope Vietnam's criminal justice system will treat wildlife crime as seriously as it deserves.

Yours sincerely,

Erika Ceballos, Animal Conservation and Welfare Foundation  
Jan Creamer, President, Animal Defenders International  
Jill Robinson MBE, Founder & CEO, Animals Asia Foundation  
Rhishja Cota-Larson, Founder, Annamiticus  
Raghu Chundawat, Joanna Van Gruisen. BAAVAN, Bagh Aap Aur Van  
Will Travers OBE, President, Born Free Foundation  
Erika Ceballos, President, CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society  
William W. Rossiter, Executive Director, Cetacean Society International  
Nirmal Ghosh, Trustee, The Corbett Foundation  
Karen Botha, CEO, David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation  
Belinda Stewart-Cox OBE, Acting Director of Conservation, Elephant Family  
Michele Pickover, Director, EMS Foundation, South Africa  
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Mr Edwin Wiek, Founder and Director, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand  
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