



The President of South Africa

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PETITION TO PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, HIS EXCELLENCY CYRIL RAMAPHOSA, MEMBER OF THE G20 AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION

We, the *EMS Foundation and the World Animal Protection - Africa*, with the endorsement of the undersigned African organisations, request President Cyril Ramaphosa—as a member of the G20 and as Chairman of the African Union—to support a G20 ban on international wildlife trade and an immediate and permanent closure of wild animal markets.

Scientists agree that a genomic comparison suggests that the SARS-Cov-2 or COVID_19 pandemic is the result of a recombination between two different viruses, meaning that the exact origin of the virus is unclear.

In December 2019, 27 of the first 41 people hospitalized with the virus passed through a food market located in the heart of Wuhan city in Hubei Province in China. The vendors at this market brought a variety of live wild animals together for purchase, slaughter and consumption. The scientists are still not sure in which animal species the virus occurred, bats and pangolins could both have been the reservoir for the virus.

The COVID_19 pandemic has overwhelmed health systems and economies across the world. The crisis is still affecting the global economic structure in ways that will last for decades to come. According to a recent analysis¹, the cost of preventing further pandemics over the next decade by protecting wildlife and forests would equate to \$ 26.6 Bn, which is only 2% of the estimated financial damage caused by Covid-19 alone, \$11.5 Tn.

¹ https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/23/preventing-next-pandemic-fraction-cost-covid-19-economic-fallout?CMP=share_btn_fb&fbclid=IwAR2CE5zNEzRqz4VJdDNsHWnOE5Z2DSQgr7ncRgz13wA3xzFRCTtIDNm-VeM

The pandemic has reinforced the importance of physical access to key sources of goods production. More activity will become virtual and therefore global but at the same time the production of physical goods will become national.

All available evidence for COVID_19 suggests that SARS-CoV-2 has a zoonotic source². Since there is usually limited close contact between humans and bats, it is more likely that transmission of the virus to humans happened through another species, one that is more likely to be handled by humans.

Zoonosis are infectious diseases caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi or parasites that can spread from animals to humans. They can be transmitted through direct physical contact, via air or water or through an intermediate host like an insect. Often these zoonotic pathogens do not affect the animals in which they reside, but they can represent an enormous risk to humans who have no natural immunity to them.

The COVID_19 pandemic provides a stark reminder that handling or coming into close contact with wildlife along with their body parts and/or excretions like blood, spit and urine all of which are found at wet markets poses a risk of spillover of the pathogens they host and maintain in nature, and that can lead to zoonotic infections.

Zoonosis is an infectious disease that can be transmitted from an animal to human. Any person working with wild animals is at risk of such a disease. Zoonosis is commonly associated with poverty and impacts the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor people. The World Health Organization reports that there are over two million deaths per year and over two billion people are affected. The results of a zoonosis outbreak impacts humans, animals and ecosystems, agriculture, food security and sustainability³. The wildlife trade⁴ is driven by a demand for wildlife in zoos, to be used as pets, to be consumed in luxury goods production, as food, and use in traditional medicine. The current health crisis has highlighted globalization, the way in which we live, work and travel has spread COVID_19. The global pandemic has also highlighted that zoonotic spillovers are a result of human actions towards animals and the way we interact with them.

The exploitation of wildlife⁵ by humans through hunting and trade, leads to habitat degradation and close contact between the two, increases the risk of virus spillover⁶. Trade is a key reason for human contact with wildlife⁷. The legal wildlife trade is regulated domestically and internationally by institutions whose mandate does not include protecting public health. In addition, the so-called legal trade is de facto purely regulated and intrinsically linked to the illegal trade, as highlighted by two South African reports, “The Extinction Business”⁸ in 2018 and “Breaking Point” in 2020⁹.

² Andersen, G.A., Rambaut, A., Lipkin, W.I. et al. 2020. The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2. Nat Med.

³ Grace, D., Infectious Diseases in Agriculture, in Encyclopedia of Food Security and Sustainability, Volume 3, 2019, Pages 439-447, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-100596-5.21570-9>

⁴ We define the wild animal trade as the legal and illegal commerce of such live wild animals, as well as of their parts and derivatives. We are not advocating for restrictions on the movement of animals for non-commercial trade (e.g., conservation, sanctuaries).

⁵ We define wild animals as non-domesticated species captured from the wild or bred in captivity; a particular focus is required for mammals and birds as these have been the sources of past zoonotic outbreaks.

⁶ <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2019.2736>

⁷ Steve Broad, CEO Traffic, DEFF Webinar Covid19 and Wildlife Trade, 4th June 2020

⁸ <http://emsfoundation.org.za/wp-content/uploads/THE-EXTINCTION-BUSINESS-South-Africas-lion-bonetrade.pdf>

⁹ https://emsfoundation.org.za/wp-content/uploads/BreakingPoint_FINAL_15052020_web.pdf

The emergence of infectious zoonotic disease outbreaks have increased dramatically in the last 30 years and the most likely causes are anthropogenic commercialization drivers such as: increased number of farmed animals – including wild animals; increased hunting, increased trade in and transport of wild and domestic animals and increased agricultural activities and expansion of agricultural land¹⁰ with consequent degradation of eco-systems. Biodiversity loss increases the risks of viral spillovers. Reducing such risks requires maintaining wild animals in secure and intact wild habitats and minimizing wild animal-human interaction, including by severely limiting the use and trade of wild animals, particularly for sale as luxury meats in large urban wildlife markets.

It is internationally recognized that all species react to unsuitable conditions and when stressed and immune-compromised they become a vehicle for pathogens and the ideal environment for the emergence and spread of infectious diseases which can then be transmitted to humans. Good welfare conditions are not possible for commercially farmed wild animals. More worryingly, animal farming is a system which allows the same or better production at lower costs, therefore welfare and wildlife farming are contradictory concepts. In terms of welfare, the more controlled the environment is, the more the physiology of the animal stresses¹¹. We will never be able to predict how the transmission will cross a species. So, whenever we try to farm domestic or wild animals for economic benefits, we expose humanity to pathogens that are and can be extremely dangerous for humans¹².

Wildlife farms can also contribute to the spread of infections and diseases to domestic farmed animals, humans and other wildlife. This is a threat to conservation and to traditional cattle farming and consequently also to those communities relying on a few animals for food. Farmed wildlife have shown to be carrying ticks, a carrier of the *Borrelia* bacteria; a number of skin diseases are caused by farmed animals, both domestic and wild. Of additional concern is Tuberculosis, which affects a large number of humans and nonhumans and it is currently making victims in South Africa and in countries where we export wildlife to.

In the case of the big cat breeding industry, the slaughter of animals and export of bones involves serious food health and safety violations. Individual lion 'slaughterhouses' are operating outside of South African law and are not compliant with food safety law and/or occupational health legislation especially given that many lions might be affected by bovine Tuberculosis.

The implementation of ecosystem and animal welfare initiatives largely depend on political will. The number of farmed animals should be reduced, not increased, as part of transformative changes for sustainability¹³. This would mean lower risk of zoonosis, efficient land use, less harm to climate, improved biodiversity and cleaner land, water and air. Ultimately, it would mean initiating that transformative process to honor the Sustainable

¹⁰ Professor Thijs Kuiken, Comparative Pathology at the Department of Viroscience of the Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam, The Netherlands and Di Marco et al. Moreno Di Marco et. al., Sustainable development must account for pandemic risk, PNAS February 25, 2020, 117 (8) 3888-3892; <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.200165511>)

¹¹ European Parliament's Committee on Petitions commissioned study on Animal Welfare in the European Union, 2017, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2017\)583114](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2017)583114)

¹² Professor Lu Jia Hai, Epidemiology, University of Guangzhou, Webinar; Zoonotic Risks in Wildlife Farming, 28 April 2020

¹³ *Ibid.*

Development Goals¹⁴ South Africa committed to. Sustainable conservation should mean sustainable livelihoods through sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism addressing community needs, versus the extractive use of wildlife for the benefit and enjoyment of a few. Investments towards developing new, long term opportunities are indeed required.

Global and national action to curb the wildlife trade is one of the most effective strategies to prevent future pandemics, and is necessary to reduce animal suffering and protect biodiversity¹⁵ and the people. Protecting wildlife, biodiversity and animal welfare needs to be part of a global and national pandemic prevention strategy.

We specifically recommend that:

1. The G20 meeting in November 2020 commits to ending the international trade in wild animals and wild animal products that could contribute to the spread of zoonotic disease and ask global institutions and bodies and their national parties to put in place mechanisms to develop, facilitate, and implement this ban.
2. South Africa curbs the import, export and domestic trade in wild animals and wild animal products that could contribute to the spread of zoonotic disease.
3. All wild animals are removed from South Africa’s ‘livestock’ list or classifications.

Tennyson Williams
Director – World Animal Protection, Africa

Michele Pickover
Director – EMS Foundation – South Africa



Signatories in support of Petition above to President Cyril Ramaphosa:

Name of Organization	Contact person	Position
Ban Animal Trading – South Africa	Smaragda Louw	Director
Four Paws Animal Welfare Foundation – South Africa	Fiona Miles	Director

¹⁴ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

¹⁵ Wishart, David. Commentary: Four states to help avoid the next pandemic. Folio. May 28 2020 www.folio.ca/commentary--four-strategies-to-help-avoid-the-next-pandemic/; Kolby, Jonathan. To prevent the next pandemic, it’s the legal wildlife trade we should worry about. *National Geographic*. May 7 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2020/05/to-prevent-next-pandemic-focus-on-legal-wildlife-trade/>

Humane Society International- Africa	Tony Gerrans	Director
Future 4 Wildlife – South Africa	Stefania Falcon	Co-Founder
Global March for Elephants and Rhinos – South Africa	Megan Carr	Vice-President
Animal Law Reform South Africa	Amy P. Wilson	Director
Baboon Matters	Jenni Trethowan	Founder
Beauty Without Cruelty (South Africa)	Toni Brockhoven	Chairperson
Centre for Animal Rehab and Education – South Africa	Samantha Dewhirst	Director
South Peninsula Customary Khoisan Council – SA	Stephen Fritz	Senior Chief
Global White Lion Protection Trust – South Africa	Linda Tucker	CEO Founder
Institute for Critical Animal Studies (Africa)	Les Mitchell	Director
Monkey Helpline – South Africa	Steve Smit	Co-Founder
OSCAP (Outraged South African Citizens Against Poaching)	Kim Da Ribeira	Director
Sea Shepherd South Africa	Prathna Singh	National Coordinator
Southern African Fight for Rhinos	Lex Abnett	Director
Vervet Monkey Foundation – South Africa	Dave Du Toit	Founder
WildAid Southern Africa	Guy Jennings	Director
African Climate Alliance - SA	Sai Irux	Director
GFG Environmental Education – South Africa	Jabu Myeni	Director
Parliament for the People, Regenerative Farming and Climate Justice in South Africa	Vivien Law	Founder
Youth Climate Group – South Africa	Sera Farista	Founder
Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute	Francesca De Gasparis	Executive Director
Coalition of African Animal Welfare Organisations (CAAWO) - SA	Tozie Zokufa	Director
Climate Justice Coalition _ South Africa	Rehad Desai	Representative
Extinction Rebellion South Africa	Anita Khanna	Representative
Panthera Africa – Western Cape SA	Cathrine S. Nyquist & Lizaene Cornwall	Founders Directors
Dr Brett Bard -Veterinarian, South Africa		
South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public and Human Rights and International Law - South Africa	Professor David Bilchitz	Director
Advocates 4 Earth – Green Law Connect, Zimbabwe	Lenin Chisaira	Founder
Zimbabwe Elephant Foundation	Nomusa Dube	Founder
Elephant Human Relationship Aid, Namibia	Rachel Harris	Managing Director
Dr Ross Harvey Environmental Economist, Botswana		
Hands-off Fernkloof, South Africa	Peter Hodgskin	Founder
Mutare SPCA, Zimbabwe	Lynne James	Committee Member
WildlifeDirect, Kenya	Dr Paula Kahumbu	Director
Lawyers for Animal Protection in Africa	Jim Karani	Advocate
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Africa Network for Animal Welfare, Kenya	Kahindi Lekalhaile	Director
Giorgio Lombardi, Vogelgat Private Nature Reserve, South Africa		Warden
Advocate 4 Earth, Zimbabwe	Linda Masudze	Founder
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Prof Dan Wylie - Rhodes University, South Africa		