

TIGER MEETING URGES TOP-LEVEL ACTION FROM GOVERNMENTS – BUT LEAVES TIGER FARMS OUT

April 15, 2016

The 3rd Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation, running from April 12-14 in New Delhi, has culminated with the adoption of a resolution that new impetus is needed to end poaching and the trafficking of tiger parts and derivatives, and to halt declines of tiger habitat and prey.

The resolution calls for the highest levels of government to address demand for tiger body parts, but stopped short of addressing the supply of tiger parts and derivatives from tiger 'farms' which feed legal and illegal trade, both domestic and international, and perpetuate demand.

Conservation successes are only happening in Tiger Range Countries with strong laws and where wild tigers are valued for their role in the ecosystem and not in those Range Countries where tiger farming exists and where they are valued only as a commodity.

Tigers are recovering in India, Nepal, Bhutan and the Russian Far East but in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam they are functionally extinct; comprehensive estimates of tiger populations are yet to be concluded in Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and China. Delegates conceded that "the global scenario is still a cause for major concern".

Tiger skins, meat, teeth, claws, bones and bone products from wild and farmed tigers are still consumed in China and Vietnam and by Chinese consumers in Lao PDR and Myanmar. The trade in tiger parts and products is undertaken by organised criminal networks raising serious concerns about the survival of tigers in the wild. In addition, habitat loss and fragmentation continues to pose a major threat to tigers with increasing pressures on the areas required for viable tiger populations.

Supplying and stimulating the marketplace for many years, the growing number of facilities breeding and keeping captive tigers, and the growing number of captive tigers across Asia, continue to spell trouble for wild tigers everywhere; there are more than 7,000 tigers in captivity across South-East Asia and China. Laws in China and Lao PDR allow the trade in parts and products of captive tigers and the licensed domestic trade in the skins of zoo and farm tigers has been well documented in China.

In his inaugural address to the conference, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi told delegates the "conservation of the tiger is not a choice, it is an imperative", and highlighted that a major threat to tigers is the demand for their body parts and derivatives.

The poaching and trafficking of 39 tigers across their range has been recorded in 2016 to date, with 26 in India alone, representing a peak in trade in the first quarter of the year unseen since 2001. There is no room for complacency and efforts towards zero poaching must be complemented by rapidly stepping up work towards zero demand.

The tiger urgently requires governments to:

- prohibit legal domestic trade in tiger parts and derivatives from captive facilities among all consumer countries;
- end tiger breeding for commercial purposes and phase out tiger farms;



- destroy stockpiles of tiger parts and derivatives;
- strengthen enforcement efforts and international cooperation to effectively combat tiger poaching and trade; and
- secure tiger habitat and prevent habitat fragmentation.



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