



Media Release

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WWF welcomes tiger range countries' call for increase in investment in the frontlines of tiger conservation

WWF today welcomes the commitment by tiger range governments to increase investment in the frontlines of tiger conservation, re-affirming their commitment to doubling the number of wild tigers by 2022.*

Making the call at the closing of the 2nd Asian Ministerial Conference (AMC) on Tiger Conservation, hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan and the World Bank's Global Tiger Initiative, the ministers and heads of delegations of the tiger range countries specifically asked for intensified support in actively strengthening the frontlines through enhancing recognition, resources and capacity of frontline staff to fight against tiger poaching. The call is included in the *Thimpu Affirmative Nine-Point Action Agenda on Tiger Conservation*, issued at the end of the conference.

These frontline staff – forest guards, park wardens, rangers and other field enforcement staff – working tirelessly under harsh conditions and facing danger everyday from ruthless poachers, are critical to achieving Zero Poaching. Yet, they are not always fully appreciated nor recognized for their work.

“The declaration of intent by the countries at the 2nd AMC is very welcome and should be highly commended,” said Mike Baltzer, Leader of WWF's Tigers Alive Initiative. “It is an important step towards Zero Poaching, which is a critical immediate component of the efforts to double wild tiger numbers in the next ten years. Only calling for investment in frontline staff, however, may not be enough to make a sharp and significant dent in the levels of poaching. We need a major intensive, collaborative push by all concerned – tiger range countries working with partners and donors – to eradicate, if not drastically reduce poaching as soon as possible. Each day's delay is a set back for tigers and each time a tiger is poached, it makes the TX2 goal harder to reach.”

Poaching of tigers, to feed consumer demand for their body parts and products, is now the main factor undermining efforts and reversing the gains made by governments, donors and other partners working towards the 2022 goal. Reports of poaching and smuggling of tigers and their body parts are still rife.

Other positive signals of progress and commitment to tiger conservation were included in the Thimpu Nine Point Agenda and recent announcements provided similar demonstrations of intent. For instance, in mid-October, the Indian government proposed a manifold increase in its tiger conservation budget for the next five years.

The conference included a commitment to intensify trans-boundary collaboration against the illegal tiger trade and to launch targeted demand reduction programmes. The work of frontline staff was highlighted when Her Royal Highness Princess Azhi Kezang Wangmo Wangchuck awarded certificate of recognition to five rangers and foresters working in various parks in Bhutan during the inaugural session of the conference.

Bhutan was a perfect and inspirational setting for the conference. The small nation ranks as among the most biodiverse countries on Earth, has a population that is supportive of tiger

conservation, and boasts one of the most progressive nature conservation policy frameworks in the world, including a commitment to maintain 60% forest cover in its constitution. At present, forest cover exceeds 70%.

Also at the conference, government delegates from all 13 tiger range countries committed to making improvements towards enhanced protected area management. Cambodia also announced plans to create an inviolate space in its Eastern Plains as the basis for a reintroduction programme to recover tiger populations in the country.

Bhutan's Agriculture Minister, Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, released the *Tigers Across Borders* report, which details findings of the first joint tiger monitoring study undertaken by Bhutan and India. It was the first time any two countries had designed together and conducted a tiger survey simultaneously. Partners involved in the survey included the governments of Bhutan and India, WWF, ATREE, Aranyak and The Bhutan Foundation. The survey identified a total of 14 individual tigers, five each living in India's Manas Tiger Reserve and the adjoining Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan, and four that are common to both parks. This reinforces the need for collaborative management of trans-boundary parks and landscapes.

** In November 2010, all 13 tiger range countries committed to the goal of doubling wild tiger numbers by 2022 (Tx2) at the Tiger Summit hosted by the Russian Government in St. Petersburg.*

For further information:

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About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

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