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Leading conservation organisations call for the G20 to support fundamental changes to international wildlife crime and wildlife trade laws to help prevent future pandemics

London, 20 November 2020 – 20 of the world’s leading conservation organisations today issued a joint Declaration to the G20 calling for urgent action to invest in nature to protect biodiversity and reduce the risk of future pandemics.

In an unprecedented statement in advance of the G20 Leaders Summit in Riyadh on 21 and 22 November, the Wildlife Conservation 20 (WC20) urged governments to act now to avoid future wildlife-related catastrophes.

As a member of the WC20, the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime (EWC) fully endorses the unified call for action set out in the Declaration.

“The widespread devastation caused by COVID-19 is a serious wake up call. We must fundamentally change our relationship with nature. Business-as-usual is simply not an option.” said John Scanlon AO, Chair of EWC. “We need transformative reforms to our international legal framework for preventing and combating wildlife crime and for regulating wildlife trade, and we must massively scale up our the investment in nature. Left as it is, our system is not going to prevent the next wildlife-related pandemic. It could, in fact, be raising our potential exposure to zoonotic diseases. We owe it to the next generation to leave them with a system that is fit for purpose in a post COVID-19 world”.

The WC20 believes that world leaders gathering in Riyadh this weekend have an unparalleled opportunity to build long-lasting action into COVID-19 economic recovery packages, to conserve planetary health and reset human interactions with nature.

Those priority actions are directly in line with EWC’s objectives, including the recommendations in the Declaration that call for a new international agreement on wildlife crime and the adoption of a ‘One Health’ approach to regulating wildlife trade, namely:

R1.1 “Adopting the ‘One Health’ approach recommended by the World Health Organization and other multilateral organisations, which includes cross-sectoral safeguards for people, animals and ecosystems in order to mitigate zoonotic outbreaks. This would include strengthening multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches to quantify, prioritise and mitigate zoonotic spillover risk, especially for commercial trade and markets in wild animal species and in high risk spots such as farming areas near tropical forests, commercial wildlife captive farming and industrial livestock operations”;

R1.5 “For species where commercial trade (domestic and international) is allowed, enact the implementing and updating of international and national legislation and regulations to ensure it is sustainable, traceable and safe – or, as appropriate and following consultation, closed down on the occasion where it poses a likely, evidence-based risk of zoonotic transmission to people or other animals or threatens the survival of the species in the wild; while ensuring that science-based solutions based on biological, public and animal health criteria, and criteria to protect biodiversity and human and animal health, are adopted to regulate trade in species”; and

R1.6 “Adopting a fourth Protocol under the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime to enshrine a commitment to prevent and combat wildlife crime (plants and animals) as well as zoonotic spillovers and foster cooperation between source and demand countries”.

The investments required are a fraction of the estimated \$26 trillion in economic damage COVID-19 has already caused, representing an exceptional return on investment for G20 leaders, and an opportunity to drive a positive recovery.

In a joint statement, the WC20 said: “COVID-19 has been a wake up call to everyone on this planet. Now is the time to value and invest in nature by developing sustainable nature-based economic stimulus packages that embrace a One Health approach and address long-term planetary health, food security, poverty alleviation, climate change, and biodiversity loss and work towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals”.

The full text of the Declaration is available at www.spaceforgiants.org/WC20.

In summary, the WC20’s recommendations are:

- **Policy and Implementation:** Strengthen, sufficiently resource, and implement existing international and domestic legislation, and enact new legislation, to ensure the legal, sustainable, and traceable use of natural resources including wildlife, that no longer threatens human or animal health.
- **Law Enforcement:** Scale up financial and technical support for law enforcement in key wildlife source states, transit hubs and destination countries/territories. Adopt a

collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to help create an effective deterrent to wildlife crime.

- **Safeguard Natural Ecosystems:** Secure government support, adequate finances, and technical expertise to effectively protect and manage natural ecosystems and wildlife so that they are valued and safeguarded, and become generators of economic wealth, and commit to scale this up to 30% of land and sea over the coming decade.
- **Support Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities:** Recognise and respect the rights of IPLCs living within and/or depending on natural ecosystems, to improve human well-being, alleviate the pressures of human-wildlife coexistence, and reduce, halt, and reverse the loss of natural habitats and the associated wildlife they hold.
- **Reduce Demand:** Work with government authorities, stakeholders, civil society, and major influencers to inform the public about the dangers of zoonotic spillovers and how to lower their risks. Raise public awareness about, and reduce demand for, illegally and/or unsustainably exploited wildlife and their products.

The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime is an alliance of individuals and organisations that support the need for international law reforms to address gaps in wildlife trade and wildlife crime laws. It is hosted by the ADM Capital Foundation, overseen by a small Steering Group comprising the Born Free Foundation, the Global Environmental Institute, the ICCF Group and the Food and Land Use Coalition. It is chaired by John Scanlon AO, former Secretary General of CITES.

More information on EWC, including its Steering Group, the organizations that have signed up as Champions of the Initiative, and its Special Advisers and Supporters, can be found on the EWC website [here](#). Stay up to date with EWC by following their LinkedIn account [here](#).

Media Contacts	
Liberty McCarthy ADM Capital Foundation E : liberty.mccarthy@admcf.org	Theo Gott SYSTEMIQ E : theo.gott@systemiq.earth