

Thailand's Business Leaders Pledge to Protect Elephants and End the Demand for Ivory



Bangkok (13 March 2017) - On Thai Elephant Day, WildAid united 15 prominent Thai business leaders with a pledge to never use elephant ivory or other wildlife products. In a show of solidarity, the nation's top business leaders joined our call and urged stronger enforcement and more effective wildlife conservation action.

Thailand is a major destination market and trans-shipment hub to China and other markets for ivory products primarily from some of the roughly 33,000 elephants poached annually in Africa. To help raise awareness on this issue WildAid enlisted the help of Mr. William Ellwood Heinecke, Chairman and CEO, Minor International Public Company Limited, to spearhead the effort by asking fellow business leaders to join the pledge and stand united against the illegal ivory trade.

"As business leaders, I think we can lead by example to help raise awareness about this critical issue in Thailand, help reduce demand for ivory and demonstrate the Thai public's strong commitment to protecting elephants and the environment. Because when the buying stops, the killing can too," said Heinecke.

Among the business leaders joining Heinecke was also former deputy prime minister M.R. Pridiyathorn Devakula and several from Thailand's Forbes 2016 list including Mr. Santi Bhirombhakdi, President of Boonrawd Brewery Co., Ltd; Mr. Harald Link, Managing Partner of B.Grimm Group of Companies and Mr. Banthoon Lamsam, CEO and Chairman of the board of directors for Kasikorn.

In an effort to grow corporate support in Thailand to end the elephant ivory trade, WildAid published the complete list of initial signatories, known as the Founders' Circle on the campaign website (www.ivoryfreethai.org) that is being promoted throughout the country to encourage more business leaders and the Thai public to take the pledge. These efforts will soon be supported with public service announcements and visual advertisements in major cities.

"The business elite in Thailand, and the public, when aware of the problem, are very supportive of conservation," said WildAid Asia Program Manager, Brian Adams.

The elephant is the national symbol of Thailand and there is considerable national pride and heritage to support elephant conservation. The current government has already taken several steps to improve regulations and awareness regarding elephant ivory. In 2015, Thailand's Elephant Ivory Act was introduced to regulate the country's legal market in ivory from domesticated elephants. The government also prohibited the trade and sale of ivory from African elephants by enacting an amendment to the country's existing Wild Animal Reservation and Protection Act, making African elephants a protected species in Thailand.

CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and international conservation groups recognize the considerable progress Thailand has made over the past year, but fear that it may not be enough. Hong Kong's history has shown that legal ivory sales

only serve to provide a cover for illegal trade, despite the government's insistence that they have strict control mechanisms in place to regulate ivory sales. At a global scale, on 2nd October 2016 countries at the UN CITES conference adopted a resolution calling on all countries to take necessary measures to close their domestic ivory markets.

"We are hopeful for the current government to reconsider its stance to gradually ban all ivory trading in the country, joining China, the United States and Hong Kong that have pledged landmark commitments to phase out their ivory trade as per the newly adopted CITES resolution," added Adams

The pledge and complete list of its signatories are copied below.

"Pledge on wildlife conservation and ending demand for ivory in Thailand"

As business leaders of Thailand, we are committed to doing what is good for business, our country and also the environment and wildlife.

We are committed to leading efforts in the business community to conserve the rich natural heritage of Thailand and beyond.

We hereby pledge:

- 1) To lead by example in developing sustainable and socially responsible business practices.
- 2) Not to purchase, use or give as gifts any illegal wildlife products and ivory.
- 3) To encourage friends, family and employees never to purchase any illegal wildlife products.
- 4) To support efforts to conserve Thailand's rich natural heritage and protect wildlife.

Recognizing both the fragility of our natural heritage and the extraordinary opportunities to conserve it, our goal is to engage positively in environmental conservation.