



The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP  
Prime Minister of Australia  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

7 October 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

### **Seeking support for global agreement to combat wildlife crime**

We write this letter seeking Australia's support for a world-first agreement on wildlife crime, specifically in the form of a Fourth Protocol to the *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime* (UNTOC).

The *Jane Goodall Institute Australia* (JGIA) is an Australian registered charity (ABN 98 125 319 771) and a not-for-profit organisation. Our purpose is to inspire actions that connect people with animals and our shared environment. Moved by the work of our founder, Dr Jane Goodall DBE, we recognise the interconnectedness between all living things, including the impact that our choices and actions as custodians will have on present and future generations of life on Earth.

As one of 24 national chapters of the Institute around the globe, JGIA is grateful to call Australia home. Australia is one of the most ancient, naturally beautiful and biodiverse places on Earth. As an island- continent, Australia has some of the world's most diverse ecosystems, boasting a rich evolutionary history, nineteen World Heritage properties, sixty-six Ramsar sites, more than one million species of plants and animals (many of which are found nowhere else), and is globally recognised as one of the planet's 12 'mega-diverse' regions. However, our country, like so many others, is exploited by a multibillion-dollar transnational criminal enterprise that must be stopped.

Wildlife crime not only challenges the rule of law but undermines human and ecosystem health, national security, economic prosperity, and livelihoods. The World Bank values the impacts of illegal logging, fishing, and wildlife trade at USD 1-2trillion annually, including loss of financial, natural, social, and political capital. It also inflicts unspeakable cruelty on millions of animals each year and contributes substantially to the crisis of biodiversity loss, which continues to accelerate the pace of climate change globally. Further, wildlife crime increases the risk of zoonotic disease transmission, with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) estimating some 1.7 million undiscovered viruses thought to exist in wild animals, of which approximately half could spill over to humans.

In a 2020 assessment drawing on data from nearly 180,000 seizures across 149 countries and territories, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that almost 6,000 species were seized between 1999 and 2018. No single species accounted for more than 5% of the seizures. No single country was identified as the source of more than 9% of the total number of seized shipments. Suspected traffickers were positively identified as belonging to some 150 nationalities.

We at JGIA understand the complexity of the problem and know that no one country can fight wildlife crime alone as transnational crime knows no bounds. This is made exponentially more difficult in the absence of a global agreement on combating wildlife crime. However, we believe there is an opportunity for Australia to rise to the challenge as part of a truly global response.

Together with our colleagues at the *Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime* (EWC), we support the creation of a Fourth Protocol to the *UNTOC* to address the illicit trafficking of wildlife. The proposed Protocol would position wildlife trafficking within the scope of international criminal law and provide a framework for state obligations. This would include adopting legislation, criminalizing the intentional illicit trafficking of specimens of wild fauna and flora (in any whole or part, whether living or deceased), increasing coordination and exchanging intelligence regarding known organized groups and techniques of concealment, sharing forensic samples, strengthening border and authenticity controls, as well as implementing strategies to reduce demand. If adopted, the Protocol would be the fourth to UNTOC, the others concerning human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illegal manufacturing and trafficking in firearms.

There is increasing international momentum towards this reform. In April, the European Union communicated its support on page 16 of its *Strategy to Tackle Organised Crime 2021-2025*. In May, President Carlos Alvarado Quesada of Costa Rica and President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon united in their calls to ‘end the scourge of wildlife trafficking’ through a joint statement advocating for the Fourth Protocol. Their Excellencies were joined in September by President João Lourenço of Angola. More broadly, in July, the UN General Assembly adopted a comprehensive Resolution on *Tackling Illicit Wildlife Trafficking* by consensus – the fifth in its series of resolutions on the issue following 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. This latest resolution specifically “invites parties to the UNTOC to more effectively use the Convention to address illicit trafficking in wildlife, and to continue discussions on other possible international tools to combat wildlife trafficking.”

As a Party to the UNTOC, we ask that Australia support this initiative to address serious gaps in the existing international legal framework. We have given the issue extensive attention locally and internationally through our global campaign to end wildlife trafficking, *#ForeverWild*. Based on our years of research and experience, we respectfully request that the proposed form and content of a possible Protocol provided by EWC be seriously considered by yourself and others concerned. The proposed Protocol is available in several languages, together with FAQs at: <https://endwildlifecrime.org/untoc-wildlife-protocol/>.

It is time to turn the tide against mass extinction and organized crime. We thank you in advance for your consideration of this transformative, urgently needed, and vital reform.

Yours faithfully,



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