Calls for an end to Cambodia’s wildlife trade in response to the coronavirus

Phnom Penh, Cambodia - January 30, 2020 - In response to the rapid spread of the deadly coronavirus, NGO Wildlife Alliance is calling for Cambodians to uphold the laws and stop the consumption of wildlife meat.

The coronavirus has been traced back to the consumption of wildlife meat and is strongly believed to have originated from the wildlife market of Wuhan, China. The virus has infected more than 7,700 people in 18 countries worldwide and has now reached Cambodia as of this week.

The consumption of wildlife has been identified as the cause of the coronavirus, as is also the cause of the deadly epidemics SARS and Ebola.

Wildlife Alliance is appealing to the public to stop eating and selling wildlife. Whether dead or alive, wild animals can increase the risk of catching a new disease.

For the sake of public health, Suwanna Gauntlett, Wildlife Alliance CEO, calls upon upper class Cambodian consumers. “Please stop hunting wild animals for trophies and stop ordering wildlife meat for your holiday consumption. Not just the meat of wild boar and deer, but also of pangolins. All these wild meats are now a red alert danger for consumer health. As long as Cambodia’s wildlife trade continues, the risk will continue to exist for the health of the Cambodian people”.

Wildlife Alliance fights the illegal wildlife trade through its Wildlife Rapid Rescue Team (WRRT), a dedicated wildlife police unit that inspects markets and restaurants, and arrests smugglers trafficking wild animals to Vietnam and China. WRRT has gained recognition as the best wildlife law enforcement unit in Asia.

Since 2001, Wildlife Alliance has rescued more than 72,000 live animals from the illegal wildlife trade in Cambodia - each animal saved is an avoided risk of transferring diseases to humans.

Ms. Gauntlett expresses that law enforcement alone is not enough to significantly reduce Cambodia’s illegal wildlife trade. “The demand from consumers of wildlife needs to stop. If we can reduce demand then we will reduce the supply. Reducing demand means reducing public health risk”.

Wildlife Alliance commends the continued efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia and WRRT who work to fight Cambodia’s rampant illegal wildlife trade, helping to ensure the protection of the environment and the health of the Cambodian people.

If you see wild animals held in cages or bags or you know of an illegal smuggling shipment, please call the Wildlife Crime Hotline on 012 500 094 or report it to the Wildlife Crime Hotline Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/WCHCambodia/).
January 30, 2020 | Calls for an end to Cambodia’s wildlife trade in response to the coronavirus

Wildlife Alliance’s WRRT hold pieces of wildlife meat that were seized in a raid on a restaurant in Koh Kong province this month. Click here for a high-quality image.

An endangered Asian giant softshell turtle that was seized by WRRT at a restaurant. Click here for a high-quality image.
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**About Wildlife Alliance:**

*Wildlife Alliance was founded by Suwanna Gauntlett to offer direct protection to forests and wildlife through cutting edge conservation programs. The organization provides technical assistance and critical thinking to governments and strives for stakeholder consensus in achieving solutions to multiple environmental threats, including animal trafficking, economic land concessions for agro-industrial plantations and mining, and community encroachment on forestland. Wildlife Alliance is the leader in direct action in the Southeast Asian tropical belt.*

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