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Conservationists Call on China to Support Law Over Tiger Farms

Twenty-eight organizations involved in tiger conservation around the world today called on China to maintain its successful ban on tiger trade, after tiger farm owners yesterday urged the government to reopen trade in tiger parts.

China's 1993 ban on domestic trade of tiger bones has been essential in contributing to preventing the extinction of wild tigers by curbing demand in what historically has been the world's largest consumer market for tiger parts and products. Lifting the ban would reignite demand for tiger products and would accelerate the alarming declines of wild tigers remaining across Asia.

- **Tiger bone is not needed for traditional Chinese medicine.** Key members of the traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) community and leading TCM practitioners have repeatedly expressed support for the trade ban and dismiss claims that tiger bone is an essential medicine. Effective alternatives are now widely available, and demand for tiger bone has dropped significantly among TCM users. Fewer than 3 percent of TCM shops across China were found in a recent market survey to offer tiger bone medicines, suggesting that there is little remaining demand from legitimate TCM practitioners.
- **Tiger farms have zero conservation value.** Tiger farming actually has negative conservation value, since any legalized trade in tiger products will jeopardize tigers in the wild. It costs many times more to raise a tiger in captivity than it does to poach a tiger, so killing wild tigers will always be more economically attractive. China's tiger farms now house thousands of semi-tame tigers, which lack the skills to survive in the wild and which hold no value to reputable captive breeding programmes.
- **Wild tiger populations across Asia cannot sustain any increased threat from trade.** Banning tiger trade over the last decade has helped reduce poaching pressure on wild tiger populations. Experts agree, however, that if China legalizes trade in products from farmed tigers, poaching of wild tigers will certainly increase. Any legal market will open opportunities for organized crime syndicates to "launder" poached tiger products as legal and will make law enforcement far more difficult at a time when some wild tiger populations cannot withstand any increase in poaching.

- **With protection, wild tigers will “breed like cats.”** To survive and thrive, wild tigers need large forest tracts filled with prey and protected from poachers. Tigers will do the rest.

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