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## IUCN COUNCIL STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE ST. PETERSBURG DECLARATION AND THE GLOBAL TIGER RECOVERY PROGRAM

**The tiger in crisis:** This Year of the Tiger, underscores the urgency for a critical effort to avert the extinction of one of the world's most charismatic animals. With less than 3,500 left in the wild today, down from 100,000 a century ago, the tiger is on the brink of extinction.

The tiger is a flagship species of great ecological, cultural and intrinsic value not only to the 13 Asian Range Countries where it still survives in the wild, but also to every nation and all people.

The tiger is the face of Asia's biodiversity and an emblem of the world's natural heritage. Action to save the tiger from extinction includes action to restore a part of its original forest habitat – the surest way to regenerate valuable ecosystem services, advance other conservation goals and create livelihoods for some of the most marginalised people on our planet.

**The tiger can be saved:** We know that targeted conservation action works. The latest data from the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* show even in the face of today's alarming rate of extinction, global conservation efforts have already reversed the decline of at least 64 major species and reduced the rate of biodiversity loss by 20%.

IUCN commends Tiger Range Countries for their dedication and cooperation in developing the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP). This unprecedented joint commitment by governments distinctly raises the hope that the number of tigers in the wild could be doubled by 2022, the next Year of the Tiger.

GTRP comprises a comprehensive, broad-spectrum conservation strategy that should be able to revive tiger numbers and build up viable populations in the range countries. By protecting and valuing tiger habitats; fighting wildlife crime and illegal trade in tiger parts; engaging with local communities; strengthening national and regional policies and institutions; promoting transboundary cooperation; and attracting resources necessary to support it, the Program will also benefit biodiversity and conservation goals more broadly.

**No “paper tiger”:** The International Tiger Forum, bringing together top-level political leadership from Tiger Range Countries and hosted by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg from 21-24 November 2010, promises to be the most significant meeting ever held to discuss the fate of a single non-human species. It offers the first real hope that the global community can recognize an impending resource collapse that does not originate directly from a financial crisis. But to truly prevent this collapse, and for the St. Petersburg Declaration and the GTRP to be more than just a “paper tiger”, they must be backed by the highest political commitment and funding.

At the 10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at Nagoya in October 2010, 193 nations agreed unanimously on the following target: *“By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained”*.

The tiger offers world leaders an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate their resolve to fulfill this target. This will need commitment at the international level and action domestically by each Tiger Range Country to greatly strengthen conservation laws, enforcement of those laws, management structures to protect habitats, education, and local community outreach in the Tiger Range Countries. This will also require a large increase in funding, technical advice and capacity building from the international community.

International trade in tigers and tiger parts is universally illegal. It must be stopped, immediately. The countries of origin or destination of such trade must now enforce their laws with utmost rigour.

**IUCN’s commitment:** IUCN and its Species Survival Commission (SSC) will work proactively with governments, agencies, businesses and civil society to ensure that the implementation of the GTRP gets the highest priority.

IUCN will mobilize its members, which include governments and NGOs in almost all the Tiger Range Countries, to actively support all measures to implement the GTRP and to create widespread public awareness and commitment for this. Through TRAFFIC, the joint wildlife monitoring programme of IUCN and WWF, IUCN will work to assist countries to bring the illegal trade in tiger parts to an end.

IUCN, which has the global responsibility to monitor the status and trends on the tiger, will strengthen its capacity to keep its present status as ‘Endangered’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species under continuous review.

The broad expertise of the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group is available to help plan, guide and implement specific components of the GTRP, and provide other technical and scientific inputs.

Furthermore, SOS – the initiative to Save Our Species ([www.SOSpecies.org](http://www.SOSpecies.org)) -- recently launched by IUCN, the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank, to support on-the-ground conservation of threatened species, mobilize funding from new sources, and raise awareness of the biodiversity crisis offers an ideal and transparent channel for funds from a variety of sources to where tigers need it most.

**Towards 2022, the next Year of the Tiger:** We embrace the vision of the Tiger Range Countries, acclaim and affirm their will and commitment, and enjoin it with that of our own. We aim to ensure not only that the Global Tiger Recovery Program is launched with urgency and sustained with care so that the next Year of the Tiger 2022 presents the world with a welcome cause for celebration and a model of success. Saving the tiger can then become an example for how all parts of our society can stand together to avert the final annihilation of a fellow creature.

[Adopted by the IUCN Council at its 75<sup>th</sup> meeting in Gland, Switzerland, 18 November 2010]