

Press Release

For immediate release

WWF Applauds Cambodian Government Approval of the Cambodia Tiger Action Plan

Phnom Penh, Cambodia – 06 April 2016 – WWF congratulates The Royal Government of Cambodia on its approval of the Cambodia Tiger Action Plan (CTAP), a critical step toward reintroducing tigers into the country.

The Cambodian Tiger Action Plan (CTAP) is a species management plan written by the Royal Government of Cambodia as part of Cambodia's commitment to the global goal of doubling tigers by the year 2022. The plan identifies the Eastern Plains Landscape of Monduliri province as the first priority site for tiger restoration.

Historically Cambodia's dry forests in the Eastern Plains Landscape supported diverse and abundant wildlife, including a large number of tigers - however, intensive poaching of both tigers and their prey led to a rapid decline in the big cats. The last tiger was seen on camera trap in the Monduliri Protected Forest in 2007. Today there are no longer any breeding populations of tigers left in Cambodia, and they are therefore considered functionally extinct. As such the Cambodian Tiger Action Plan recommends tiger reintroduction. This would be the world's first transnational tiger reintroduction and will be based on best practices developed from successful tiger reintroductions within India.

The CTAP has been two years in the making and considers the social, economic and cultural benefits and consequences of reintroducing tigers into Cambodia. The plan has been produced according to the global objective of doubling the number of tigers worldwide (Tx2).

"We are committed to reintroducing the iconic tigers into their historic range of the Eastern Plains Landscape in Cambodia and CTAP is a big step in the right direction for this goal. We appreciate the support of WWF and together hope to see the tigers return to Cambodia", Dr Keo Omaliss, director of the department of wildlife and biodiversity at the Forestry Administration

The Tiger Reintroduction Plan in Cambodia shows the Royal Government of Cambodia's commitment to the global goal of doubling tigers (Tx2) by the year 2022 – the next Year of the Tiger. WWF is fully committed to support the Government in this conservation effort. Tx2 is achievable, but only with the full commitment from the tiger range countries. The approval of CTAP by the Cambodian Government signifies their commitment to reach this goal by 2022.

Tigers are one of the most iconic species on the planet, yet they are more than just a beautiful animal. Reintroducing tigers not only benefits Cambodia's forests and wildlife, but the people of Cambodia too. The reintroduction offers a unique eco-tourism opportunity into the

landscape. Many tiger habitats in Southeast Asia such as mangroves or dense rainforest are not well suited for tourism, whereas Mondul Kiri's open and accessible forests offer an opportunity for successful tiger tourism. Tigers are also a flagship species and symbolize conservation efforts for all of Cambodia's endangered species. As well as a symbolic conservation effort, tigers also represent a balanced ecosystem and a healthy forest. The tiger reintroduction therefore symbolizes hope and strengthened conservation for the whole region.

On the 12th – 14th April, the 3rd Asia Ministerial Meeting on Tigers will be held in Delhi. This is a pivotal meeting in the global goal to double wild tigers. The meeting will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India and it is a key opportunity for the government officials from all 13 tiger range countries to come together and discuss the goals. Senior officials from both MoE and MAFF will be attending this meeting in Delhi, as well as members from WWF.

“Tigers are an iconic species and part of our natural heritage. To bring tigers back to Cambodia would be the biggest conservation feat of its kind and would support the conservation efforts of the whole landscape. We are completely committed to the goals of Tx2 and hope to work closely with the Royal Government of Cambodia over the next 6 years to make this a reality,” Chhith Sam Ath, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia.

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About WWF-Cambodia

WWF was established in Cambodia in 1995 as a part of the WWF Greater Mekong Programme. WWF's mission in Cambodia is to ensure that there will be strong participation and support from all people to conserve the country's rich biological diversity. Through the encouragement of sustainable use of natural resources, WWF-Cambodia promotes new opportunities for the benefit of all people, enhancing local livelihoods and contributing to poverty reduction in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Go to cambodia.panda.org for more information.

About Tx2 – The Global Goal to Double Wild Tigers

Tigers are the largest species of cat and one of the most iconic animals on the planet. One hundred years ago, there were 100,000 wild tigers. Today as few as 3,200 wild tigers remain. The shocking 97% population decline is driven by rampant poaching and habitat loss. In 2010, governments of tiger range countries decided it was time to take a stand. The most ambitious and visionary species conservation goal ever was set: to double the number of wild tigers by 2022 – the next year of the tiger. The goal is called Tx2. We are WWF's global tiger programme, driving Tx2 forward. <http://tigers.panda.org/tx2/#sthash.NmjvwxwRQ.dpuf>