**Ministry of Environment and WWF join hands to raise public awareness on wildlife and forest protection during Global Tiger Day**

**Mondulkiri province, Cambodia, July 29, 2019**, - The Ministry of Environment and WWF will celebrate Global Tiger Day in Mondulkiri Province with events designed to raise public awareness about the benefits that tigers can bring to people and nature, the value of wildlife and biodiversity in the Mondulkiri province, and how bushmeat hunting and consumption can seriously impact wildlife populations. The events will take place in Sen Monorom town, Mondulkiri Province July 28-29, 2019.

A 5 km “Race for Tigers and Wildlife” will take place on the morning of July 28, 2019 and a mini concert will be held on July 29, 2019 in the afternoon at Sen Monorom’s Public Garden. On July 29, 2019 there will also be performances, games, quizzes and an exhibition for residents of the province.

People can register for the race in advance at the WWF office in Ospean village, Spean Meanchey commune, Sen Monorom town, Mondulkiri province. The race is open to all ages and will begin at the WWF office in Mondulkiri . People can find out more about the events and participate in quizzes and other activities via the WWF-Cambodia Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WWFCambodia/>.

Mondulkiri is uniquely rich in biodiversity.  It is home to 34 species of global significance including: what could be Cambodia’s largest population of elephants; the world’s largest populations of banteng; the yellow cheeked crested gibbon; the rare and threatened Indo-Chinese leopard; and more than 334 bird species, including at least 14 listed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as globally threatened. The last tiger in Cambodia was photographed in 2007 in Mondulkiri Province and the Royal Government of Cambodia has announced an ambitious plan to reintroduce them and protect the region’s impressive biodiversity. Cambodians can be proud that their country is home to such special birds and animals. The celebration of Tiger Day is an acknowledgment of Cambodia’s unique biodiversity.

In 2010, governments from countries with current and historic tiger populations made a commitment to the most ambitious conservation goal set for a single species; TX2, or the global goal to double wild tigers by 2022. The decades-long trend of decline in global wild tiger numbers has halted since 2016 and their numbers may finally be on the rise, signaling a beacon of hope for global tiger conservation.

Cambodia is one of the 13 tiger range countries that has committed to this ambitious global goal, and the Global Tiger Day event aims to raise awareness and support for the reintroduction of tigers. By doing their part to reduce bushmeat sales and consumption, Cambodians in Mondulkiri Province can help be a part of the plan to finally see tigers return to Cambodia.

Challenges remain to the achievement of this goal. Among many threats to the health of forests and animals, snaring remains one of the most significant. Iconic wildlife, including the Kouprey and the globally endangered tiger have been decimated by hunting. Snaring is the most common and cheapest hunting tool and it is an indiscriminate killer of animals, from rabbits to large elephants. Recent data show a real snaring crisis is present at this moment in Cambodian forests. In Phnom Prich Wildlife Sanctuary and Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary alone, 3,000 snares are confiscated each year.

Local and international demand for bushmeat is a primary reason for the snares that are emptying Cambodia’s forests of important wildlife. WWF and its partners are working to encourage everyone to join forces to say no to bush meat and help protect these important animals.

“Snares are the silent killers of wildlife in our forests, and they are devastating Cambodia’s diverse and globally important wildlife populations,” said Teak Seng, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia. “We ask hunters to stop the hunting, request consumers to immediately stop buying wildlife meat, and urge the Cambodian government to effectively crack-down on the bushmeat markets and the possession of snares in protected areas.”

The awareness events are supported by the Ministry of Environment, the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

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**About WWF- Cambodia** (World Wide Fund for Nature)

WWF was established in Cambodia in 1998 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 wwf.org.kh for more information.