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Press Release

For Immediate Release

## Tigers at a Crossroads in the Greater Mekong due to roads, dams, tiger farms and poaching, WWF Says

**Bangkok, November 23, 2016** -- Infrastructure such as roads and dams, along with tiger farms and poaching, are a major threat to the survival of wild tigers across the Greater Mekong region and must be addressed by governments and private industry, WWF said today at the halfway point of an effort to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. The Dawei road project across Myanmar's Dawna Tenasserim Landscape (DTL) is one such challenge, highlighted in a new report released by WWF today on roads and other infrastructure in tiger habitat.

Released at the halfway point of an ambitious global effort to double the number of wild tigers between 2010 and 2022, [The Road Ahead: Protecting Tigers from Asia's Infrastructure Development Boom](#), highlights the unprecedented threat posed by a vast network of planned infrastructure across the continent.

"Tigers are an important part of the cultural and natural heritage of each country in the Greater Mekong region, but unless drastic action is taken to secure them, their future here is uncertain at best due to multiple threats," said WWF Greater Mekong Conservation Director Teak Seng. "As we hit the halfway point in our global effort to double tiger numbers, the urgency is increasing to act decisively or risk extinction of this majestic species from the region."

Tigers are functionally extinct from Cambodia and Vietnam, and have largely disappeared from Laos. In Myanmar numbers are unknown but appear to be declining. Thailand is the best hope for tigers in the region, but numbers are low, with fewer than 200 remaining, and part of their habitat would be destroyed if a proposed dam is built within Mae Wong National Park.

There are signs of hope. In 2010, the global tiger population estimated 3,200 individuals in the wild. But over the past six years, tigers have shown signs of recovery in India, Russia, Nepal and Bhutan due to better management of protected areas, transboundary collaboration initiatives, endorsement of the Zero Poaching approach, greatly improved monitoring capacity and enhanced efforts to tackle tiger trafficking. There are now an estimated [3,890](#) tigers in the wild.

If similar measures are taken in the Greater Mekong region, tigers can recover without doubt. The tiger population at Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary in Thailand has increased over the past decade due to strong protection efforts by the Thai government.

In October, Laos [announced](#) that it would close its tiger farms, while Thailand has initiated investigations into all facilities that hold captive tigers after shocking discoveries at the [Tiger Temple](#) earlier this year proved the Temple was involved in the illegal trade of tiger parts. Similar decisions are needed in Vietnam, followed by strong political will and action to implement them – given that a new [report](#) finds that 30 percent of tiger seizures in Asia between 2012 and 2015 were from captive tiger facilities.

Cambodia's Tiger Action Plan, along with a recently created illegal logging task force and plans for an anti-snaring task force headed by the Ministry of Environment, indicate that the government is taking [tiger reintroduction](#) and conservation seriously. Ensuring that the Eastern Plains Landscape is fully protected and that poaching is controlled over the long term will be crucial to the success of the reintroduction plan.

Mr. Chhith Sam Ath, Country Director of WWF-Cambodia said " The Royal Government of Cambodia has taken its first step to recover the wild tigers population in the country to align with global effort of doubling the tigers, by approving Cambodia's Tiger Action Plan at the beginning of 2016. To achieve the tiger reintroduction plan, we need to address challenges such as poaching, illegal logging, and other infrastructure development pressures in and around protected areas. We will fully support the Royal Government of Cambodia to overcome the challenges to make this ambitious plan implemented successfully.

The proposed Mae Wong Dam – which would provide few benefits in terms of flood control and irrigation for farmers – is not yet built, and WWF hopes it will be permanently shelved. If the road across the DTL in Myanmar and Thailand is built, WWF has proposed a series of [recommendations](#) that will help minimize the damage to tiger habitat, such as wildlife crossings, design changes and a user fee to support conservation efforts and communities within the landscape.

WWF is working with governments across the region to close [illegal wildlife markets](#) and reduce poaching and the demand for endangered species such as tiger, rhino and elephant.

"If these steps are taken and governments integrate the conservation of tigers and their habitat into their development plans, there is hope for tigers in the region, but countries must act now before the impacts from large infrastructure development irreparably damage the forest habitat that sustains tigers, other wildlife and people," Seng said.

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**About WWF Greater Mekong:** The Greater Mekong is home to some of the planet's most endangered wild species, including the tiger, saola, Asian elephant, Mekong dolphin and Mekong giant catfish. Over 2,216 new species have been found in the Greater Mekong since 1997. WWF-Greater Mekong works on conservation initiatives through country programmes in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. WWF-Greater Mekong's mission is a future where humans live in harmony with nature. To learn more about WWF's activities, please visit us at [www.panda.org/greatermekong](http://www.panda.org/greatermekong)

**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](http://cambodia.panda.org) for more information.