



30 Tour Operators and Travel Agencies Pledged to Protect Vietnam's Nature and Wildlife

Hanoi, 17 December 2020 – Representatives from 30 tour operators and travel agencies signed a pledge to support responsible tourism, nature conservation and wildlife protection during the training workshop "Responsible Tourism in Support of Nature and Wildlife Conservation". The event was co-organized by People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature) and the Responsible Tourism Club (RTC) at Cat Tien National Park from 11 to 12 December 2020.

Vietnam's tourism sector has gained an annual growth rate about 22.7% during the period of 2015 - 2019, which made the country on top among world's travel destinations. In 2019, Vietnam welcomed more than 18 million international visitors and 85 million domestic travellers.

Tourism associated with natural experiences and wildlife exploration has become a trend worldwide. However, besides positive contributions to the economy and the development of local communities' livelihoods, the tourism sector also poses negative impacts on the environment, nature and wildlife. The World Animal Protection (WAP) has warned that more than 500,000 wildlife individuals through out the world, including elephants, sloths, tigers and dolphins, are being abused to entertain tourists¹. Impacts on natural landscapes and wildlife species do not only come from tourism activities, or the boom of mass tourism in recent years alone, or unmanageable consequences and overloaded capacity. Tourists' demands for local "exotic products", including food, medicine and jewelry from wildlife also contribute to threatening endangered species.

A 2018 report² by TRAFFIC focusing on illegal ivory markets in Vietnam, specifically in Ha Long and Mong Cai (Quang Ninh); Ban Don, Lak (Dak Lak); Nhi Khe village (Hanoi), found that Chinese tourists are dominant consumers of ivory products. Another previous study by TRAFFIC in 2014 concluded that wildlife customers with multiple purchases were Chinese (including those from Hongkong and Taiwan), Thai, Vietnamese, overseas Vietnamese and Europeans. Turning blind eyes to wildlife consumption or tourists' behavior toward wildlife would not only be harmful to nature but also have negative impacts on long-term prestige and benefits of tourism companies, whose operation relies much on the beauty of nature. Workshop participants agreed that it's crucial to set up directions and strategies for the sustainable development of tourism sector to reduce risks for their own business and preserve Vietnam's natural and environmental values – one of key factors for the sector's growth as well.

At the workshop, participants exchanged information and discussed the close relationship between tourism and nature, the situation of wildlife trade in tourism activities, orientation and practice for developing responsible tourism, and how to encourage behavior change towards illegal wildlife trade in the sector. In particular, to affirm the spirit of supporting responsible tourism with environment, nature and wildlife conservation, 34 representatives from 30 travel agencies and tour operators in Ho Chi Minh City, Ninh Binh and Da Nang signed a pledge with following points:

¹<https://wild.com.au/news/world-expeditions-add-weight-fight-wildlife-cruelty-tourism/>

² Traffic, 2018. *From Tusk to Trinket*. <https://www.traffic.org/publications/reports/from-tusk-to-trinket/>

- RESPECT nature, ecosystems and local cultures in tourism activities;
- SHALL NOT exploit, use, trade, transport, store, consume, advertise or introduce illegal wildlife products;
- DEVELOP and OPERATIONALIZE a Code of Conduct on responsible tourism for protecting the environment and nature, and embed it into corporate culture;
- PROMOTE cooperation with national parks and nature reserves in designing, setting up, promoting and developing tourism products associated with conservation and responsible tourism;
- STRENGTHEN communication and promotion of responsible tourism to relevant partners, staff, tourists, local communities and general public;
- ACTIVELY JOIN networks and coalitions related to responsible tourism for promoting sustainable tourism principles in Vietnam for our people and nation.

Mr. Pham Hong Luong, Director of Cat Tien National Park, appreciated the signing session and affirmed: "Cat Tien National Park is a biodiversity hotspot with very diverse and rich ecosystems, rare and precious flora and fauna, and beautiful natural landscapes. These are very important factors and prerequisites for promoting ecotourism. We are proud to host this meaningful workshop. We really appreciate the strong commitments, practical supports, and close cooperation of organizations, individuals, and travel agencies to responsible tourism associated with the protection of nature, environment, and biodiversity conservation, towards the goal of sustainable development and a green future for Vietnam".

"We welcome the commitment and support of travel agencies and tour operators to promote the trend of responsible tourism associated with the goal of wildlife protection and nature conservation", according to Mr. Trinh Le Nguyen, Director of PanNature. "PanNature is delighted to join hand in promoting the cooperation between the tourism sector and protected areas in designing, setting up, and developing sustainable and responsible tourism products to contribute to preservation of the beauty of Vietnamese culture, nature and people. We will continue to mobilize resources to support this course for a sustainable tourism sector with strong tie to nature conservation".

Ms. Truong Thi Hien, Chairman of RTC, commented: "Joining this workshop is a valuable opportunity for travel agencies to have an overview of nature and wildlife conservation, especially through the field visit in Cat Tien National Park. RTC and PanNature have brought agencies that already practiced responsible tourism and new ones that are initially learning about this direction together. They shared their experiences and sought directions for better communication and improving their products and services as well. RTC hopes to have other opportunities to continue supporting them to disseminate the message of effective environmental protection and wildlife conservation in tourism."

The training workshop was financially supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)

Participating Tour Operators and Travel Agencies:

1. Center for Environmental Education and Services, Cat Tien National Park
2. Center for Environmental Education and Forest Services, Bu Gia Map National Park
3. Center for Ecosystem – Culture – History of War Zone D, Dong Nai Culture and Nature Reserve
4. Center for Environmental Education and Ecotourism Services, Yok Don National Park
5. We Love Vietnam's Nature Family Group (Gia đình em yêu thiên nhiên Việt Nam)
6. Footprint Travel
7. Trang An Travel

8. Wildlife and People Ecotour - WAP Ecotour Co.ltd
9. TRANSVIET Travel
10. BenThanh Tourist
11. Vietravel
12. Viet Dynamic
13. PHD Travel
14. Tripee
15. Farm Madabay
16. Golden Beach Tourist
17. SaiGon Land Travel
18. Penguin Travel Service
19. Bao Long Investment, Development and Travel Co., ltd
20. Truong An Construction and Trade and Travel Co., ltd
21. Scivi Travel
22. Easia Travel
23. Wildtour
24. Tik Tok Travel
25. Saigon PRO Guides
26. OAT Vietnam Travel
27. New Horizon Adventures
28. Authentik Vietnam Travel
29. Golden Transport
30. RTC

For more information, please contact:

People and Nature Reconciliation

Address: 24 H2, Khu đô thị mới Yên Hòa, Yên Hòa, Cầu Giấy, Hanoi, Vietnam

Phone: 024 3556 4001 (ext 111) Fax: 04 3556 8941

Email: truyenthong@nature.org.vn

Website: <http://www.nature.org.vn>

More information about the training event (in Vietnamese):

<https://nature.org.vn/vn/2020/12/du-lich-co-trach-nhiem-voi-thien-nhien-va-bao-ton-dvhd/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PanNature/posts/4269495319732809>

Photo: Representatives from travel agencies and tour operators at the training workshop "Responsible Tourism in Support of Nature and Wildlife Conservation" organized in Cat Tien National Park, Dong Nai province, Vietnam from 10 to 12 December 2020.