



Letter to Prime Minister of Viet Nam

Regarding the rampant killing of and trade in wild and migratory birds in Viet Nam

Dear Prime Minister of Viet Nam,

His Excellency Pham Minh Chinh,
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Office of Government
Hanoi, Viet Nam

Hanoi, 22 May 2021

Dear H. E. Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned Vietnamese and international non-profit organizations working in nature and wildlife conservation, firstly would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister of Viet Nam. We believe that under your leadership, Viet Nam will continue to reach new achievements in the future. We are writing this letter to you to express our concerns on the long-pending rampant killing of and trade in wild and migratory birds in Viet Nam, and to request the Government to take strong and drastic measures to end this massacre.

In the already challenging times of the 4th wave of COVID-19 in Viet Nam, the rampant trade in wild birds nationwide that has recently been reported by the press may cause more outbreaks of other new emerging zoonotic diseases. This would pose a risk of creating epidemic catastrophes, destroying efforts and achievements in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic and bring anxiety among the entire society. The World Health Organization (WHO) has scientific evidence to confirm that in excess of 70% of all new emerging infectious diseases in people are spread from animals, most of which are from wild species. Wildlife markets (including wild bird markets and restaurants) have been reported to have linkages to SARS-2002, avian influenza and COVID-19 pandemic.

The killing of wild and migratory birds has caused biodiversity loss and affected ecosystem functions and Viet Nam's image in the international arena when Viet Nam has been a state member of many international conventions and commitments related to the protection of wildlife. Without drastic and effective measures to quickly end this situation, Viet Nam is at high risk of being included in the list of countries with many wild and migratory bird species threatened with extinction due to poaching and trade.

Viet Nam has been identified as one of the most important areas in the East Asia-Australia bird flyway network. Becoming the 34th member of The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) in 2014 showed our strong commitment to protecting wild and migratory birds. Recently, Viet Nam officially approved the World Leaders' Pledge for Nature in Resolution 05/NQ-CP¹ dated January 15, 2021. In Article 6 of the Pledge, Viet Nam has joined 84 countries around the world in committing to ending supply chains of illegal wildlife trade and working with international communities to ensure sustainable solutions for people and nature. The current massacre of wild and migratory birds does not show that Viet Nam has been in compliance with Article 6 and the EAAFP.

Wild and migratory birds have long been hunted, and illegally traded widely and openly on a large scale in many places throughout Viet Nam, especially in some hot-spots around protected areas and biosphere reserves such as Xuan Thuy, Cat Ba, Tram Chim, Mui Ca Mau National Parks and in big cities such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city, Mekong Delta provinces (Thanh Hoa Agriculture Market in Long An; Tam Nong Bird Market in Dong Thang etc.). Many rare, precious and protected bird species of Viet Nam and the world are captured, slaughtered, stored and sold in the nationwide restaurant chain named "Birds grow bigger", and in shops selling wild birds, challenging law enforcement agencies. Recently, the problem has been exposed in many investigative press reports, attracting the public attention who requested an immediate end to these destructive activities.

¹ Resolution on approving Viet Nam's support to the World Leaders' Pledge for Nature on the occasion of the UN Summit on Biodiversity within the framework of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Viet Nam is inhabited by more than 900² out of over 10,000³ bird species in the world (accounting for about 9%), widely distributed throughout the country. Unfortunately, according to the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR)⁴, Viet Nam has 11 Critically Endangered(CR) bird species, 19 Endangered(EN), 27 Vulnerable(VU) and 51 Near-Threatened(NT) species in the latest IUCN Red List. With the current situation of hunting, trapping, capturing and consuming wild and migratory birds, the number on those lists will increase rapidly.

We highly appreciate the number of legislative documents on the protection of wildlife issued by Viet Nam's government. Nevertheless, the lack of specific regulations on the protection of migratory and wild birds has weakened the enforcement by relevant authorities. Especially, a large number of wild birds and most of the migratory bird species are not listed as endangered, rare and precious species under Decree 06/2019/ND-CP⁵, Decree 64/2019/ND-CP amending Article 7 of Decree 160/2013/ND-CP⁶, therefore the law enforcement agencies have no legal basis to handle the cases or handle very light punishment.

To maintain populations of wild and migratory birds as well as other wildlife species, conserve biodiversity, ensure functional ecosystem and prevent disease outbreaks, we would like to recommend H.E Prime Minister a comprehensive approach with a series of specific measures as follows:

1. Strengthen monitoring the implementation of Directive 29/CT-TTg dated 23 July 2020 of the Prime Minister on a number of urgent solutions for wildlife management: requesting ministries, agencies and provinces to lead, supervise, evaluate, have prompt reward to good examples and apply stringent discipline for agencies that do not strictly follow the Directive. People's Committees at all levels should be made responsible for protecting wild and migratory birds;
2. Amend, supplement and issue new laws and specific regulations for protection of wild and migratory birds, especially birds that have the roles of pollination and insect pest control in agriculture, as well as strengthening punishments on related violations;
3. Issue legal documents to prohibit advertising, selling, buying, using traps to capture and kill wild and migratory birds and other destructive specialized handmade tools;

² http://datazone.birdlife.org/country/Viet_Nam; Le Manh Hung, Bui Duc Tien, Nguyen Manh Hiep, Tang A Pau, Tran Anh Tuan (2020), *Birds of Viet Nam*, TNXB The Gioi (821 page), ISBN: 978-604-77-8518-6

³ https://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/birds_and_biodiversity_targets_report.pdf

⁴ IUCN assessment on Aves (Viet Nam: 5/2021) from NT to EX: 108 species; <https://www.iucnredlist.org/search>

⁵ Decree No. 06/2019/ND-CP dated 22 January 2019 on management of endangered, precious and rare species of forest fauna and flora and CITES implementation

⁶ Decree No. 160/2013/ND-CP dated on criteria to determine species and regime of managing species under the list of endangered precious and rare species prioritized protection

4. Issue legal documents to ban the eating, killing, storing, transporting, selling, buying wild and migratory birds, their meat and body parts;
5. Develop a national action plan to protect and enable recovery of wild and migratory birds.
6. Participate in the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).

We believe that the Government's strong policy decisions to protect wild and migratory birds as well as other wildlife are actions of practical significance for Viet Nam to achieve the goal of reversing the trend of biodiversity loss worldwide towards 2030, and prevent the risks of diseases caused by trade and consumption of wildlife species. With our expertise, we stand ready to accompany the Government in this important process.

We look forward to hearing from you and would like to nominate WWF-Viet Nam⁷ as the focal point to contact your office on this matter.

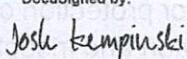
On this occasion, we would like to extend to the Prime Minister our best wishes for your health and success.

Most respectfully,



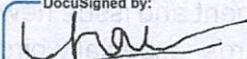
Van Ngoc Thinh
CEO, WWF-Viet Nam

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Josh Kempinski
Country Director, Vietnam Program
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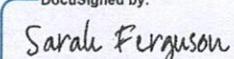
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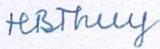
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Sarah Ferguson
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⁷ Dr. Van Ngoc Thinh – CEO, WWF-Viet Nam. Address: No.6, Alley 18, Nguyen Co Thach street, Nam Tu Liem district, Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Telephone: 0243 7192049. Fax: 0243 7192048. Email: thinh.vanngoc@wwf.org.vn

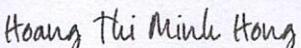
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Hoang Bich Thuy
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Vietnam Program

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Hoang Thi Minh Hong
Founder and Executive Director
CHANGE

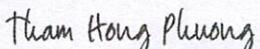
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Trinh Le Nguyen
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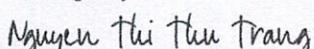
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Tham Hong Phuong
Country Director
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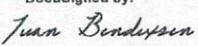
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Nguyen Thi Thu Trang
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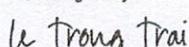
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Tuan Bendixsen
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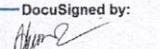
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Le Trong Trai
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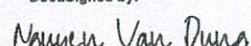
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Ngo Thi Mai Huong
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Four Paws Viet

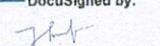
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Nguyen Van Dung
Viet Nam Country Director
Free the Bears

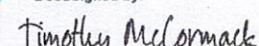
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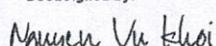
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