



World Wildlife Fund

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Media Release

Bhutan launches new National Zero Poaching Strategy, Tiger Action Plan (2017-2026) and Human-Wildlife Conflict SAFE Strategy

Paro, Bhutan, 24 February 2017: Marking another milestone in Bhutan's commitment to conservation, three significant documents – Bhutan's National Zero Poaching Strategy, Tiger Conservation Action Plan (2017-2026) and the Human-Wildlife Conflict SAFE systems strategy – were released today.

Prime Minister of Bhutan, Tshering Tobgay and President of WWF International, Yolanda Kakabadse inaugurated the new strategies and action plan in the presence of WWF CEOs and board members of Asia Pacific and partners from the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay said that the partnership with WWF is the reason why Bhutan is able to celebrate the quality of the environment and the amount of protected areas. "WWF as a principal partner has helped us identify which areas to protect, in drafting legislations, and working together to implement those legislations to really protect our protected areas," he said.

The latest Bhutan's national zero poaching strategy has been developed after sensing the urgent need to strengthen the Anti-poaching and surveillance programs to ensure safe protection of the wildlife in Bhutan.

"Bhutan's National Zero Poaching strategy is very much in line with WWF's goal for drastically reducing wildlife crime worldwide – with a combination of brave policymaking, determined implementation and robust enforcement," said President of WWF International, Yolanda Kakabadse. She said that to translate our conservation visions into reality, we must have the right policies, plans, actions and strategies in place.

On the other hand, Bhutan concluded a National Tiger Survey in 2015. An estimated 103 tigers thrive in pristine forests, including some that roam as high as 4,000 meters above sea level. The new Action Plan adopts a landscape approach to tiger conservation in Bhutan and envisions inclusion of all potential tiger habitats in the country, which may go beyond the protected area system. A science-based input from the recent tiger survey as well as other independent site-specific studies will inform this tiger conservation plan in Bhutan, according to officials.

WWF President Yolanda applauded the leadership of the Royal Government of Bhutan and the alliance with WWF "that encourages thoughtful actions and ensures preservation of vibrant ecosystem that is in Bhutan."

The Human-Wildlife Conflict SAFE System Strategy Report being released today is also a result of WWF's yearlong partnership with Bhutan's National Plant Protection Centre (NPPC) to address the emerging issues and concerns of human-wildlife conflict and food security.

In March 2016, WWF Bhutan and NPPC began preparing a long-term holistic and innovative solution to human-wildlife conflict (HWC), a critical issue for Bhutan where more than 60% of the population directly rely on livestock and crop production for livelihoods. The loss of crops and livestock in poor rural areas can have a devastating impact to households, while the



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retaliatory killing of wildlife is a challenge to long-term conservation and maintenance of national biodiversity. Hence, the Human-Wildlife SAFE System approach was introduced in four districts of Mongar, Wangdue, Trongsa and Zhemgang with an ambitious plan to scale the lessons learned at the national level. The Safe System approach of WWF, which is holistic and long-term, seeks to address the current shortcomings of HWC in Bhutan. The approach intends to create safe environment for both people and their assets and wildlife and their habitats in a landscape for their harmonious co-existence.

Country Representative of WWF Bhutan, Dechen Dorji said that the launch of the documents is just the beginning. "Implementation of the activities will continue to require enormous resources and support, after having launched the strategies. I call upon our colleagues in our WWF network to support this vision of Bhutan," he said.

During the event, students in Thimphu who are leading WWF Bhutan's Young Bhutanese Birders program were also recognized.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister also spoke about Bhutan For Life - a funding mechanism through which Bhutan's protected area system will not only be permanently protected and effectively managed, but more profoundly, ensure that Bhutan's unparalleled conservation legacy lives long into the future. With about 10,900 protected areas in the Asia Pacific, he urged the participants gathered in Bhutan this week for the annual WWF APGS CEOs and Boards Conference to replicate Bhutan For Life and set up an Asia For Life initiative.

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Notes to Editor

The photos for use by the media are available <http://bit.ly/2l8HR1r>

About WWF

WWF is one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organizations, with over 5 million supporters and a global network active in over 100 countries. WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption. Visit panda.org for news and information.

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