



24 April 2020

Office of Public Liaison  
Bureau of Global Public Affairs  
U.S. Department of State, Room 2206  
2201 C Street NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20520-2204

Subject: Secretary Pompeo's comments concerning wild animal wet markets in China

Dear friends,

Friends of Animals concurs with reported comments in which Secretary Pompeo is quoted as saying, "Given the strong link between illegal wildlife sold in wet markets and zoonotic diseases, the United States has called on the People's Republic of China to permanently close its wildlife wet markets and all markets that sell illegal wildlife."

Enclosed kindly find our April 15<sup>th</sup> letter to U.S. Representative to the U.N. Kelly Craft on this topic. We are appealing for U.S. leadership at the U.N. to achieve a comprehensive international prohibition on wild animal wet markets. We are appealing also for a monitoring mechanism that will identify non-compliance, along with substantive penalty for non-compliance. We recommend that non-compliant countries be identified as bio-hazards subject to a sanitary quarantine.

FoA is convinced that the application needs to be global, including here in the United States. We draw your attention to a peer reviewed technical article published in 2012, which reported that an analysis of illegal bushmeat intercepted by U.S. authorities at Kennedy International Airport in New York revealed the presence of simian foamy virus (SFV). True, SFV is not the same as coronavirus. Rather, SFV is from a different virus family, the one that is responsible for HIV. This is very dangerous stuff. The link to the article is:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3254615/>

U.S. authorities continue to seize contraband bushmeat from time to time. So do European authorities and other border agencies around the world. True, there are major wild animal wet markets in China. But there are also very large wild animal wet markets at Chatuchak in Bangkok, at Tomohon in North Sulawesi, at Uluwo in Lagos, and in virtually all large cities of Asia and Africa. Any of these is a potential site for transmission of zoonotic infection from wild animals to humans.

True, there is a price for shutting down these markets. But the risks associated with leaving them open are exponentially greater.

The biggest concern with closure involves issues of human nutrition and livelihoods. But this should not be a meaningful issue, because solutions exist. One solution can be found in Friends of Animals' work in Senegal, where we are creating dripper-irrigation village vegetable gardens to diminish the local peoples' dependence on animal protein. The gardens are specially conceived to function in an arid ecosystem where persistent over-grazing has already resulted in serious habitat degradation.

It is absolutely possible to close down wild animal wet markets and provide people with wholesome nutrition and important health benefits.

We appeal also that the global shut-down apply to **all** wild animal wet markets, not just the illegal ones. Keep in mind that the Wuhan market is absolutely legal, as are virtually all of the other similar markets across Asia and Africa. Viral infections do not distinguish between what is legal or illegal.

We emphasize also that we are seeking closure of **only** wild animal wet markets. Any other food commodities are not presently at issue. The big risk lies in the communication of zoonotic pathogens from wild animals to humans.

Friends of Animals is prepared to consult with the Department of State on the modalities of such projects.

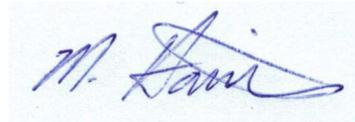
But for the immediate future, we earnestly encourage the United States to assume a leadership function at the United Nations by insisting on a closure of all wild animal wet markets worldwide, followed up by credible monitoring and serious consequences for countries that fail to comply.

The U.S. fatality rate will soon match what we suffered through a decade of war in Viet Nam. The situation is urgent and it is exceptionally grim. We have no way of knowing where or when the next zoonotic pathogen will emerge. There is compelling need to shut down the most conspicuous vehicle that such pathogens have historically been communicated to humans. Please act promptly to accomplish this.

Respectfully yours,



Priscilla Feral  
President



Michael Harris  
Director, Wildlife Law Program