



Jean Lambert MEP
Green Party Member of the European Parliament
for London

27 September 2017

HE Mr Nguyen Van Thao
Ambassador
Embassy of Viet Nam
12-14 Victoria Road
London W8 5RD

Also sent by email to:
vanphong@vietnamembassy.org.uk

Your Excellency,

Progress on ending bear farming

I am writing regarding the recent commitments from your national government to end the keeping and farming of bears for bile extraction.

I would like to welcome the announcement made in July this year of the Vietnamese Government's plan to eradicate bear farming by 2020 and work with non-governmental organisations to relocate the existing caged bears to suitable bear sanctuaries.

The Vietnamese Government is very aware of the interconnected problems of animal welfare, conservation and wildlife crime, and acknowledges that bear bile farming is impacting on wild bear populations. The Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*, also known as moon bear) and the sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) are the most heavily traded species. Both have IUCN Red List status as threatened species and are CITES Appendix 1 listed. Population decline is attributed to illegal wildlife trade and habitat loss for both species. Demand for bear bile and bear parts is driving the illegal trade.

In 2005 the Vietnamese Government committed to phasing out farming of bears for their bile. The announcement made in July this year strengthens that commitment and is to be commended.

Whilst there has been a reduction of the number of bears being farmed, from over 4000 in 2005 to a much lower level today, it is widely acknowledged that further action is urgently needed. Part of the solution should involve working with a range of non-governmental organisations who are working on the ground to end bear farming and re-home bears in sanctuaries.

It is estimated that around 1,300 captive bears still kept in extremely poor conditions in small cages and farmed for their bile. But there is a need to determine the exact number of bears kept on farms, as well as in other captive environments in Vietnam, and to document them by species.

Greens in the European Parliament

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In addition to determining the exact number of bears and their species, the highest degree of monitoring and enforcement is essential. Enhanced monitoring and enforcement will make a real difference in accelerating the eradication of bear farming.

The suffering of caged and farmed bears highlights wider welfare issues, and the need to take action against those causing suffering to bears, whether through keeping them in poor conditions or due to other forms of cruelty.

Vietnam is also well placed to set a positive example globally in the combating of wildlife crime and in the conservation of its wild bear populations, including working internationally in setting and demonstrating best practice and encouraging other countries to take action.

For the greatest impact in taking this forward, I would urge your Government to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach and work with a range of non-governmental organisations who are actively working to protect and re-home Vietnam's farmed bears.

I look forward to your reply regarding the steps your Government is taking in these areas to eradicate bear farming by 2020, re-home farmed and caged bears, tackle cruelty to bears, combat wildlife crime and conserve wild bear populations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jean Lambert', with a horizontal line underneath it.

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