

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

Thank you for the work the Department of State is doing to respond to the outbreak of novel coronavirus around the world. We are writing to urge you to take action, in partnership with other federal agencies, to shut down global illegal wildlife trade and prevent and mitigate future outbreaks of zoonotic disease.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), three out of four new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals, including several recent viral outbreaks. SARS, HIV, Ebola, MERS, and H5N1 influenza all started in animals before spreading to humans. Poorly regulated markets where live animals and wildlife parts and products are sold provide significant opportunities for the human-animal interactions that lead to disease transmission.

While the origin of the introduction of the novel coronavirus into humans has yet to be confirmed, the CDC reports that “many of the patients at the epicenter of the outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China had some link to a large seafood and live animal market, suggesting animal-to-person spread.”¹ In response to this risk, China announced a decision to permanently ban trade in wildlife for human consumption. The Prime Minister of Vietnam has also directed his government to prohibit wildlife trade and consumption by April 1. Such decisions should be welcomed, encouraged, and supported to ensure their effective implementation. However, markets where both live animals and wildlife parts and products are sold continue to pose public health threats elsewhere around the world, as well as contributing to wildlife trafficking.

We encourage the Department, in collaboration with our international partners and with other relevant U.S. government agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Agency for International Development, to work to close down unregulated wildlife markets that pose a threat to public health, combat the broader trade in illegal wildlife and wildlife products, and strengthen food safety and security around the world.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/summary.html>

We thank you for your attention to this critical and timely issue.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Burr

Richard Burr
United States Senator

/s/ Lindsey O. Graham

Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator

/s/ Rob Portman

Rob Portman
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Cc:

The Honorable Aurelia Skipwith, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
The Honorable Mark Green, Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development
The Honorable Robert R. Redfield, MD, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture