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Dear President Xi Jinping of China, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada, and world leaders attending COP15, the UN Biodiversity Conference,

The task before you could not be more urgent.

Two years have passed since Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: “We have no time to wait. Biodiversity loss, nature loss, is at an unprecedented level in the history of mankind.”

I am writing on behalf of International Animal Rescue, representing its worldwide membership of conservationists and environmentalists, nature and animal lovers, imploring you to attend COP15 this December and take vital action to protect biodiversity.

The repeated delaying of COP15, while other major meetings on climate change have gone ahead, implies to many that biodiversity loss represents less of a threat to the future of the planet than climate change, but **nothing could be further from the truth.**

Biodiversity underpins the health of the planet. Is essential for the processes that support all life on Earth, including human life. Without a wide range of animals, plants, and micro-organisms we will lose the healthy ecosystems that provide us with the air we breathe and the food we eat.

Human activity is wreaking havoc in the natural world, leading to the extinction of animal and plant species at a terrifying rate. In 2019, an intergovernmental panel of scientists said one million animal and plant species were threatened with extinction.

However, thus far, these words of warning seem to have gone unheeded. None of the targets set by the Convention on Biological Diversity have been achieved: the world has failed to reach its goals on the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of nature, and the sharing of benefits arising from genetic science.

It is widely recognised that the issues of biodiversity and climate change are interconnected. Healthy ecosystems play a key role in the global carbon cycle while also reducing disastrous impacts of climate change such as flooding and storm surges. Further loss of biodiversity will make climate change and its fallout worse.

The time to make things right is slipping away.

According to the Convention on Biodiversity website, COP15 “will see the adoption of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework”. COP15 also recognises the need for “urgent policy action globally so the trends that have exacerbated biodiversity loss will stabilise by 2030 and allow for the recovery of natural

ecosystems, with net improvements by 2050.” These are encouraging words but how will you and other world leaders show the public that what is promised is practically happening? How will you ensure promises are met?

There has been discussion about the potential lack of attendance at COP15 due to this year’s World Cup taking place in Qatar at the same time. As Elizabeth Mrema correctly addresses “all leaders will have to think twice. You can go to the World Cup but what does it mean if there’s no life beyond that when you come back?” We are at a critical point where mistakes cannot be made and decisions cannot be pushed back once again.

As conservationists, environmentalists, animal lovers, nature lovers, and humanitarians, we hear the warnings loud and clear. We urge you to please attend COP15 and take decisive action that will protect and restore the precious global biodiversity that sustains us and our planet.

The clock is ticking. COP15 – Are You Listening?

Yours faithfully

Alan Knight OBE
President
International Animal Rescue

Global Signatories,