Press Release

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PUBLIC URGED TO TAKE ACTIVE ROLE TO END ILLEGAL BEAR TRADE

(Hanoi) November 19, 2008 – A new public service announcement (PSA) airing on national TV promotes the protection of Vietnam’s bears by encouraging the public not to use bear bile and to report wildlife crimes to local authorities.

The 30-second advertisement, produced by Education for Nature – Vietnam (ENV), features a businessman and junior staff member in a café. The older businessman orders bear bile wine, but the junior staff member decides to take a stand by refusing the wine. The PSA encourages the public to report wildlife crimes to local authorities or to ENV on the national toll-free Wildlife Crime Hotline 1-800-1522.

“The bear bile business is driving illegal hunting and trade of bears in Vietnam,” says Nguyen Van Anh, head of ENV’s Wildlife Crime Program, which works to end illegal hunting and trade of wildlife in Vietnam. “The public can put a stop to the illegal trade and exploitation of bears by saying ‘NO!’ to use of bear bile.”

“People should not feel that their actions have no effect on the overall situation, because this is not true,” argues Van Anh argues. “Every individual decision to refuse bear bile helps reduce the profitability of this illegal business. Our collective individual decisions will have an impact in forcing bear traders to give up this illegal business.

“When the public takes action by reporting illegal activities to the authorities, the law enforcement agencies have often been quick to respond, confiscating illegal animals, fining business owners, suspending business licenses, and removing contraband. “Ordinary people should know that they can have an impact, and past examples show they can.”

Since the new PSA began airing in October, the ENV Hotline has received dozens of public calls reporting bear and other wildlife crimes all over the country. In Dien Bien province, authorities confiscated an illegal bear from a resident’s house after a member of the public was motivated to act after seeing the new PSA. The bear was transferred to Animal Asia’s Bear Rescue facility at Tam Dao National Park.

ENV has also begun airing a new radio commercial featuring national pop star My Linh, a long-time supporter of ENV’s efforts to protect endangered wildlife. In the advertisement, My Linh urges men to avoid consumption of wildlife:

Consuming wildlife won’t make you more of a man
It will not make you healthier
It will not make you more stylish
In fact, buying and consuming wildlife is a crime
And you could face fines or imprisonment
Stop the illegal trade of wildlife
Say NO to consumption of wildlife.
Report wildlife crimes by calling our toll free national Wildlife Crime Hotline 1800-1522

Both public service announcements can be seen or heard:
New Bear PSA: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R8DJTjCqiY
My Linh radio advertisement: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCDB_Z_kkIE

ENV wishes to thank the World Society for the Protection of Wildlife (WSPA) for supporting ENV’s efforts to end bear crimes in Vietnam. ENV also wishes to thank the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) for their role in training and advice during production of ENV’s various PSAs.

Bear Trade Facts
• According to government figures, there are about 4,000 bears in captivity in Vietnam. All but a few of these captive bears were illegally captured from the wild.

• Most scientists agree that there are more bears in captivity in Vietnam than in the wild.

• Bears are fully protected under Decree 32 of March 2006. Commercial trade of bears or parts and products made from bears, including bear bile, is illegal.

• Bear cubs are often captured and smuggled into Vietnam from neighboring countries like Laos and Cambodia. The Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), an international agreement for which Vietnam became party in 1994, prohibits international trade of bears without legal permits from both the sending and receiving countries.

ENV’s Efforts Yield Real Results
• ENV has been administering a national toll-free Wildlife Crime Hotline since January 2005. The hotline serves as an alternative means for the public to report wildlife crimes, from which ENV’s professional Wildlife Crime Unit case officers pass information onto appropriate authorities and work with them to resolve each case.

• ENV’s crime team have dealt with more than 1,450 cases resulting in the confiscation of hundreds of animals, closure of markets and illegal businesses, removal of menus and advertising, and voluntary compliance by many business owners that have agreed to stop selling wildlife. Meet ENV’s Wildlife Crime Team (link) http://www.savingvietnamswildlife.org/Documents/Meet_the_wildlife_crime_team.pdf

• ENV’s growing national network of wildlife volunteers assist with monitoring over one thousand business establishments throughout Vietnam.

• ENV’s Wildlife Mobile Awareness Unit has been traveling around the country since early 2007 hosting seminars at universities, mobilizing volunteers and conducting wildlife trade surveys in more than 17 cities and provincial towns, and holding major public events aimed at ending the illegal trade of wildlife.

• In 2008, a new ENV policy unit began working closely with key government leaders at the provincial and national level to improve laws and promote active engagement in dealing with wildlife crimes.
About Education for Nature - Vietnam

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam’s first non-governmental organization focused on conservation of nature and the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and mobilize Vietnamese citizens to live in balance with the natural world and to take action to protect Vietnam’s precious environment.

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