

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 7, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

Thank you for your Administration's continued commitment and ongoing efforts to protect pangolins — the most trafficked mammal in the world. We wish to express our continued support for your Administration's negotiations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) under the U.S. Pelly Amendment. Furthermore, we encourage your Administration to maintain the position that the PRC must: (1) completely close its domestic market for pangolins and pangolin parts, (2) transparently account for its domestic stockpiles, and (3) fully remove pangolins from its national list of approved medicines. We urge your Administration to direct certain prohibitions on the importation of, and impose trade measures on, certain products from the PRC if significant commitments by the PRC to implement CITES-directed measures to protect pangolin species have not been made by December 31, 2023, as you outlined in your Message to the Congress.

Pangolins, the world's only scaly mammals, are severely endangered by illegal poaching and trade. This trade is driven by the demand for pangolin parts in Traditional Chinese Medicine.¹ Although international commercial trade in pangolins is barred under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), in some circumstances, the sale and purchase of pangolin parts remains legal in the PRC. If the PRC refuses to close its domestic market for pangolins and pangolin products, it will continue to incentivize and provide cover for the illegal importation of the species in violation of international agreements and CITES.

We applaud the Department of the Interior's decision in August to certify the PRC under the U.S. Pelly Amendment, finding the PRC is diminishing the effectiveness of CITES by engaging in trade or taking of pangolins. Upon certification, the Pelly Amendment broadly authorizes the President to ban fish, wildlife, or other non-wildlife products imported from the PRC.

We welcomed your message to Congress, noting that while the PRC has taken some recent steps to protect pangolins, the PRC "maintains a system that allows for the legal, commercial trade of pangolin scales for medicinal use from its national stockpiles, thereby indirectly providing commercial avenues for selling illegal pangolin specimens through its domestic pangolin

¹ Zhang, Fuhua, Yishuang Yu, Shibao Wu, Amna Mahmood, Jiaming Yu, and Yue Min. "Reducing Pangolin Demand by Understanding Motivations for Human Consumption in Guangdong, China." *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 8 (2020): 574161. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2020.574161>

market.”² We agree that the PRC must urgently close its domestic markets, account for its stockpiles with transparency, and remove pangolins from its list of approved medicines for pangolins to survive and recover in the wild.

If the PRC does not agree to these necessary actions and demonstrate a sincere commitment to their implementation by December 31, 2023, we urge your Administration to issue sanctions appropriate to the seriousness of the pangolin’s imminent extinction, including a ban on the import of associated fish and wildlife products from the PRC and all products from pharmaceutical companies that are involved in the manufacture of products containing pangolin. Such sanctions should compel the PRC to close its pangolin market and fully enforce the international ban on the pangolin trade.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to ensure that all nations meet their environmental obligations and work to combat the biodiversity crisis.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member
House Select Committee on the Strategic
Competition Between the United States and
the Chinese Communist Party

Cc:

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior

Mr. Jacob Sullivan
National Security Advisor

² November 3, 2023 message to the Congress <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/11/03/message-to-the-congress-notification-to-the-congress-consistent-with-section-8-of-the-fishermens-protective-act-of-1967-as-amended-22-u-s-c-197/>