



Mr Huynh Duc Tho
Chairman
Da Nang People's Committee
42 Bach Dang Street
Hai Chau District
Da Nang City
Viet Nam

November 2015

Dear Mr Huynh Duc Tho

We are writing on behalf of the Asia for Animals coalition, representing international organisations with extensive knowledge of animal welfare and conservation issues. We express our deep concerns with regards to recent media reports suggesting that a dolphinarium is due to be built in Da Nang City.

We are concerned about this development on the grounds of animal welfare and conservation, and the negative image that it will portray of Da Nang City globally.

The keeping of whales and dolphins (also known as cetaceans) in captivity is being opposed internationally. This public opposition has led to a significant number of countries adopting legislation which forbids this practice. Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Slovenia and Switzerland have prohibitions in place due to the commercial nature of dolphinarium; Chile and Costa Rica, have prohibited the keeping of cetaceans since 2005; and in 2013, India, the world's largest democracy, passed legislation prohibiting the development of dolphinarium, referring to dolphins as "non-human persons". Greece banned all animal performances in 2012, whilst countries, such as the United Kingdom, have no captive dolphin facilities because imposed standards likely exceed the viability of establishing a dolphinarium in the country.

The news of the dolphinarium development in Da Nang City is in direct opposition to this current international trend and will therefore be seen as a retrograde step for such a forward thinking and internationally focused city as Da Nang. It is also likely to lead to a significant amount of negative press associated with this development and the subsequent incarceration of wild caught cetaceans.

The opposition to the capture and subsequent captivity of wild dolphins for dolphinarium is based on the significant conservation, animal welfare and public safety concerns that this industry presents.

The removal of individual dolphins from wild populations has serious animal welfare as well as potential conservation implications for the survival of the targeted populations. Certain live capture techniques are extremely traumatic and violent¹, but all share the following characteristics;

- Members of families or other social groups may be separated from each other;
- Dolphins can be injured and killed during the capture process;
- Studies are rarely conducted to ascertain what happens to those animals left behind;
- Once removed from their natural environment dolphins are transported to small enclosures which lack not only their social groups but also the open space to which they are accustomed;
- Research shows that death rates increase six-fold during and immediately after capture.²

Once confined, dolphins must adapt to an artificial diet, excessive noise and the proximity of people and unknown animals, and impacts from chemical treatment of the water are not uncommon. No captive facility can provide for the needs of dolphins. They are social and wide-ranging animals, capable of swimming up to 60 miles a day, attaining speeds up to 22 mph, and often diving deep below the surface. Captivity presents a lack of the social, visual and auditory stimuli of their natural environment, and many suffer from the stress of confinement, often resulting in increased aggression, illness and death.^{3 4}

Allowing the public to swim with dolphins, presents additional concerns for both the dolphins and the public. Dolphins have been observed demonstrating signs of stress when they are in close proximity to people. The dolphins are often not provided with a refuge area and cannot escape from human swimmers they don't want to interact with.

Many dolphins in such facilities exhibit behavioural traits which make them unsuitable to be used within human-animal interaction sessions. Dolphins are wild and unpredictable animals. People have been injured, sometimes seriously, swimming with dolphins. In 2008 a dolphin at the Dolphin Academy Curacao breached the water surface and landed on top of three swimmers. One person was hospitalized with symptoms of paralysis.⁵ The public may also be at risk of transmitting diseases to and contracting diseases from dolphins. A survey of people who came into contact with marine mammals resulted in 23% of respondents reporting the development of skin rashes or similar ailments.⁶

Globally, we are seeing an ever-growing number of countries passing laws prohibiting the capture and keeping of cetaceans in captivity in recognition of the risk the trade in- and keeping of- these animals poses to animal welfare and conservation.

We urge you not to grant permission for the construction of the dolphinarium, thereby

¹ C. S. Vail and D. Risch Driven by Demand: Dolphin Drive Hunts in Japan and the Involvement of the Aquarium Industry (Chippenham, United Kingdom: WDCS, 2006) http://www.wdcs.org/submissions_bin/drivenbydemand.pdf

² R. J. Small and D. P. DeMaster, "Acclimation to captivity: A quantitative estimate based on survival of bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions," *Marine Mammal Science* 11 (1995): 510-519

³ A. Samuels and T. Gifford, "A qualitative assessment of dominance relations amongst bottlenose dolphins," *Marine Mammal Science* 13 (1997): 70-99

⁴ K. A. Waples and N. J. Gales, "Evaluating and minimizing social stress in the care of captive bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*)," *Zoo Biology* 21 (2002): 5-26.

⁵ The case against marine mammals in captivity, WSPA/HSUS 2009;

http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/pdfs/marine_mammals/case_against_marine_captivity.pdf p.29/30

⁶ T.D.Hunt et al., 'Health risks for marine mammals workers,' *Diseases of Aquatic Organisms* 81 (2008); 81-92

sending a clear message to the international community, and the many tourists that visit Da Nang each year, that the keeping of cetaceans in captivity poses a significant risk to animal welfare, the conservation of wild dolphin populations and public safety.

Sent on behalf of the following organizations

- Animal Guardians
- Animal People
- Animals Asia Foundation
- ACRES
- Blue Cross of India
- Change for Animals Foundation
- Earth Island Institute
- Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations
- Humane Society International
- International Animal Rescue
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- Philippine Animal Welfare Society
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (UK)
- Sarawak Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Hong Kong
- World Animal Protection

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HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL



Supported by;

1. AAP Rescue Centre for Exotic Animals, NETHERLANDS
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6. Animal Conservation & Welfare Foundation, POLAND
7. Animal Friends, CROATIA
8. Animal Friends Niigata, JAPAN
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38. Causes for Animals Ltd, SINGAPORE
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41. Cetacean Society International
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43. Changsha Small Animal Protection Association, CHINA
44. Chengde Cat Forest, CHINA
45. Chengdu Home of Love Small Animal Rescue, CHINA
46. China Farm Animal Protection Coalition, CHINA
47. China Journalists Salon for Animal Protection, CHINA
48. China Youth Animal Protection Alliance, CHINA

49. China Zoo Watch, CHINA
50. Compassion Unlimited Plus Action, Bangalore, INDIA
51. CPR Environmental Education Centre, INDIA
52. Dalian VSHINE Protection of Animals SPCA, CHINA
53. Darjeeling Animal Shelter, INDIA
54. David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, UK
55. Djurskyddet Sverige (Animal Welfare Sweden), SWEDEN
56. Dobro Surtse, BULGARIA
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58. Dolphin Project, USA
59. Dzivnieku Draugs, LATVIA
60. Egyptian Society of Animal Friends, EGYPT
61. Elephant Aid International, USA
62. Elephant Asia Rescue & Survival Foundation, HONG KONG
63. ElephantVoices, KENYA
64. Ente Nazionale Protezione Animali – Onlus, ITALY
65. Environment Films, UK
66. European Animal Protection Foundation / Europaeische Tierschutzstiftung, SWITZERLAND
67. FAADA, SPAIN
68. Fanciers Nanning Stray Cats, CHINA
69. Finnish Federation for Animal Welfare Organisations (SEY), FINLAND
70. Finns for the Whales, FINLAND
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72. Four Paws, UK
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89. Huhhot Angel Guardian, CHINA
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92. In Defense of Animals, USA
93. International Otter Survival Fund, UK
94. International Primate Protection League
95. Jakarta Animal Aid Network, INDONESIA
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97. Jinan Cattery, CHINA

98. Karuna Society for Animals & Nature, INDIA
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101. Korean Animal Welfare Association, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
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105. Lifelong Animal Protection, HONG KONG
106. Light of Life Veterinary Clinic, SINGAPORE
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108. Lucky Cats, CHINA
109. Mahouts Elephant Foundation, UK
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112. moonbears.org
113. Nanchang Small Animal Protection Association, CHINA
114. Nanjing Ping An A Fu Stray Animal Rescue Association, CHINA
115. National Council of SPCAs. SOUTH AFRICA
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127. PETA, UK
128. PETA Asia, HONG KONG
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134. Rattle the Cage Productions, THAILAND
135. reEarth, BAHAMAS
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138. Sahayog Organisation, Andhra Pradesh Goshalala Federation, Hyderabad, INDIA
139. Save Animals Initiative Sanctuary Trust, INDIA
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145. Society for Animal Welfare and Management, NEPAL
146. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – Penang, MALAYSIA
147. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – Selangor, MALAYSIA

148. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – SINGAPORE
149. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Xiangzhou, Zhuhai), CHINA
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151. Stiftung fuer Baeren / Foundation for Bears, SWITZERLAND
152. Stray Relief and Animal Welfare, INDIA
153. Sun Bear Centre – Kalimantan, INDONESIA
154. Swiss Animal Protection SAP / Schweizer Tierschutz STS / Protection Suisse des Animaux PSA, SWITZERLAND
155. Taiwan SPCA, TAIWAN
156. Thai Fund for Elephant Foundation, THAILAND
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158. The Cattitude Trust – Chennai, INDIA
159. The Corbett Foundation, INDIA
160. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, KENYA
161. The Home of Love, CHINA
162. The Humane Education Trust, SOUTH AFRICA
163. The Welfare of Stray Dogs – Mumbai, INDIA
164. The Winsome Constance Kindness Trust, AUSTRALIA
165. Tianjin Common Home, CHINA
166. Together for Animals in China, CHINA
167. United Against Elephant Polo, INDIA
168. Vegan Virtues, AUSTRALIA
169. Vietnam Animal Welfare Organisation, VIETNAM
170. Voice for Zoo Animals, JAPAN
171. “We Are One Family” Charity Association of Chongqing Normal University, CHINA
172. Whale and Dolphin Conservation, UK
173. Wild Futures, UK
174. Wildlife Alliance, CAMBODIA
175. Wildlife in Need (and Active Environments), PHILIPPINES
176. Wildlife Protection Society of India, INDIA
177. Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore, INDIA
178. Wildlife Salvation, SINGAPORE
179. Wolf Watch UK
180. Wuhan Small Animal Protection Association, CHINA
181. Xi’an Grenadine Companion Animal Rescue, CHINA
182. Xiamen Animal Protection Education Association, CHINA
183. Xiamen Pet Web, CHINA
184. Xinjiang Karamay City Street Animal Protection Centre, CHINA
185. YeuDongVat, VIETNAM
186. Zhangzhou Small Animal Scientifically Rescue Center, CHINA
187. Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force, ZIMBABWE
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