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TRADE

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Honourable Members,

Thank you for your e-mail dated 29 April 2020 in which you refer to the reported links between trade and biodiversity on the one hand and COVID-19 on the other. I would like to reassure you that my colleagues and I take full note of your concerns.

I would also like to take this opportunity to outline a number of the actions the European Commission is currently taking on that matter, including in the area of trade policy.

Firstly, in terms of international trade in wildlife in particular, the EU and its Member States are implementing actions to ensure the effective application of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Europe as well as globally, putting in place a comprehensive, science-based regulatory framework. Looking forward, and as outlined in the recently adopted EU Biodiversity Strategy, by 2021 the Commission will revise the EU Action Plan Against Wildlife Trafficking.

Moreover, and concerning broader global action on biodiversity, the Commission is using the ongoing negotiations towards a new Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to emphasise the importance of protecting nature for a number of reasons, including for the fight against emerging infectious diseases. Our aim here, as outlined in the Biodiversity Strategy mentioned above, is to help broker an agreement for an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity framework at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) (2020-2021).

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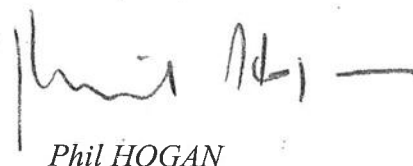
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Furthermore, the Commission has also already proposed in 2019 to take action to avoid or minimise the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market. We will present a legislative proposal and other measures on this topic in 2021.

Last-but-not-least, I would like to indicate that, we already systematically include a range of biodiversity and CITES-related provisions in EU's free trade agreements (FTAs), namely we have done it in agreements with major partners such as Canada, Japan and Mexico. For example, most recently with Mexico, we have agreed provisions to ensure effective implementation of measures to combat illegal wildlife trade and to promote the inclusion of animal and plant species in the Appendices to the CITES Convention where the conservation status of these species is considered at risk because of international trade. Similar wording has been proposed for ongoing FTA negotiations with Australia. Looking forward, we will examine ways in which we can better assess the impact of trade agreements on biodiversity, and, where relevant, will ensure follow-up action, to strengthen the biodiversity provisions of existing and new agreements.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil HOGAN', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Phil HOGAN