

# Remarks for First International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg of High Level Plenary Session

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## As Prepared for Delivery

Remarks for  
*First International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg  
of High Level Plenary Session*  
Robert B. Zoellick  
President, World Bank Group  
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Prime Minister Putin, Honorable Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, China, Lao PDR, and Nepal, Honorable Ministers, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to open by thanking the government of Russia, and in particular Prime Minister Putin, for hosting this first International Tiger Forum with the World Bank Group. Prime Minister Putin, as an outdoorsman, has shown a personal connection to wildlife conservation. And Russia has important experience to share. Half a century ago, the number of tigers in Russia's Far East dwindled to a few dozens. With intensive protection, the incredible Siberian tiger subspecies grew to about 500, only to be threatened again 20 years ago. The Prime Minister showed, with the right help and policies, tigers could revive.

I also want to express my gratitude to the leaders of all the tiger range countries for their commitment to saving wild tigers from extinction; their personal involvement is a heartening sign to the many groups – governmental, international, scientific, and conservation – that are here with us. Thank you.

### **Progress since the launch of GTI; importance of the GTRP**

Together, we have made progress since the launch of the Global Tiger Initiative in 2008.

The defining feature of the Global Tiger Initiative is that it is owned and driven by the tiger range countries themselves. As the World Bank has learned the hard way in other fields of development, if the local country doesn't own the process – no matter how well-intentioned the outsiders who seek to support – the plans won't work.

At the same time, tigers and illegal traffickers in dead tigers don't respect borders. So we need international cooperation: for borderless habitats; to stop demand for illegal trade; to attack the criminal networks that prey on wildlife.

We also need to draw the best insights – from scientists and conservationists, law enforcement, advocacy groups, rangers and park managers – to customize actions to achieve our common goal.

Time is short. With only about 3,200 tigers left in the wild, we have little margin for error. This summit is highlighting the last chance for this incredible animal.

The Global Tiger Recovery Program, driven by the tiger range countries and based on the foundations of 13 customized National Tiger Recovery Priorities, offers a new approach to the conservation of wild tigers. It describes what the tiger range countries will do to carry out the St. Petersburg Declaration. The Global Tiger Recovery Program is an expression of the collective will of the tiger range countries.

The Global Tiger Recovery Program also lays out the opportunities for international partners to assist, as we share a common responsibility.

Through a process of mutual feedback loops and accountability among the tiger range countries and the international partners, the cooperative process we are forging may well create a new business model for wildlife conservation.

The World Bank Group is proud to be a catalyst and convener and colleague of many, many parties who are more experienced and expert at wildlife conservation. We look to learn from you. We look for opportunities to use our networks and resources to encourage the various parties to find win-win solutions -- and to hold all of our feet to the fire, including our own.

I am pleased to announce today that the World Bank Group will support the Global Tiger Recovery Program in five ways.

First, the World Bank is working with Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan, and we hope India, to finance a South Asia regional Wildlife project of approximately \$100 million. Our cooperating partners include WWF, IUCN, TRAFFIC, IFAW, WCS, and others.

Second, we will work on a similar project with tiger range countries in Southeast Asia, as well as with CITES, Interpol, UNODC, WCO, and, most importantly regional institutions, such as ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Network to stop the illegal trade and trafficking in tiger body parts. This could include additional finance.

Third, the World Bank will not finance any infrastructure projects that impact core tiger breeding areas -- areas that the tiger range countries plan to make inviolate. We can and will foster sustainable "smart green" infrastructure development that not only maintains ecosystems, but enhances them.

I hope the principles of smart green infrastructure will become part of the public policy of tiger range countries and international financial institutions. Bricks and mortar should not bury biodiversity. Critical ecosystems should not be paved over for short-term economic gains.

Fourth, the Bank will work with Nepal, Malaysia, WWF, and other interested partners to develop a new Wildlife Premium Market Initiative to complement the funding we expect to support REDD+. REDD+ will help finance efforts to preserve forests and avoid deforestation.

But we don't just want silent forests, without the roars of tigers and the calls of other species. This new market initiative would recognize the value of wildlife and return benefits to local communities, while providing sustainable financing for tiger conservation. More generally, the Bank is committed to integrating natural capital valuation into national accounting systems. This may help tiger range countries to assess the true value of tiger landscapes.

Fifth, we will continue to provide support for the Global Tiger Initiative, so it can work with the Global Tiger Forum, regional institutions, country programs, scientific bodies, NGOs, the GEF, UN agencies and others to examine the progress of the Global Tiger Recovery Program. Where we can, we will try to help mobilize other resources and expertise to assist. If there is interest in the World Bank coordinating a Multi-Donor Trust Fund to support the Global Tiger Recovery Program, we would be pleased to do so.

Like all of you, I'm struck by the small window we have to turn the population of wild tigers around. Yet working together, quickly learning what works and what doesn't, mobilizing public attention and support, I believe we can save the wild tigers, their natural landscapes, and all of the biodiversity that lives with the tiger. Thank you.