

For immediate release



## PRESS RELEASE

2 June 2010

### SEIZURE OF ALLEGED BEAR GALL BLADDER AT SINGAPORE FOOD EXPO

SINGAPORE, 2 June 2010 – A tip-off from a member of the public to ACRES led to the seizure of an alleged bear gall bladder at the Singapore Food Expo. All bears are protected species and all commercial trade in bear products has been banned by CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) which Singapore is a party to.

At 4.30pm yesterday, ACRES received a call on its 24-hour Wildlife Crime Hotline with regard to a stall at the Singapore Food Expo selling a bear gall bladder. ACRES responded immediately and its investigators arrived at the scene within 30 minutes.

**The investigators were told by the seller (recorded on video) that the gall bladder (selling for S\$700) was from a bear and was brought in from China. He had only one gall bladder left as he had already sold the rest. If we gave him a call he could order more for us and have them delivered to Singapore.**

The information was forwarded to the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) whose officers responded immediately and seized the product. AVA is currently investigating the case.

Previous ACRES undercover investigations in 2001 and 2006 revealed the presence of an illegal trade in alleged bear products in Singapore, with 73.5% and 20% of the Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) shops surveyed respectively selling alleged bear products.

“This continued trade creates a demand for bear products and fuels the exploitation of bears held in bear farms. The practice of farming bears for their bile is inhumane on the grounds that it severely compromises the health of bears.” said Ms. Anbarasi Boopal, Director of ACRES Wildlife Crime Unit.

This trade is also detrimental to wild bear populations. CITES Resolution Conf. 10.8 has stated that if CITES Parties and States not-party do not take action to eliminate such trade, poaching may cause declines of wild bears that could lead to the extirpation of certain populations or even species.

AVA is the CITES authority in Singapore and administers the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act (ESA), which lists all CITES species in its Schedules. Under the ESA, it is an offence to import, export and re-export any CITES species without a permit from AVA. The possession, sale, offering or exposing or advertising for sale or displaying to the public of any illegally imported CITES specimen is also an offence. The penalties, on conviction, are a fine of \$50,000 (per species), not exceeding an aggregate of \$500,000 and/or 2 years imprisonment.

Anyone who advertises for sale any bear products contravenes the above Act, even if the products turn out to be not authentic. By making a claim that the product is from bears, the seller is potentially driving up the demand for bear products, which directly contravenes the spirit of CITES and the local legislation meant to enforce CITES.

“The public plays a crucial role in wiping out the illegal wildlife trade and we thank the caller who provided the tip-off. We urge the public to remain vigilant and keep a look out for the sale of endangered species. ACRES is confident that with the community playing an active role, we can wipe out this illicit trade before it wipes out our wildlife” said Mr. Louis Ng, Executive Director of ACRES.

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#### Notes to editors

- Photographs of the product and undercover video footage are available on request.
- ACRES is a local animal protection charity and Institution of Public Character aimed at fostering respect and compassion for all animals. It currently has more than 19,000 individuals on its supporter database.

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