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## PRESS RELEASE



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### WIPE OUT THE ILLEGAL PET TRADE BEFORE IT WIPES OUT OUR WILDLIFE

SINGAPORE 3 NOVEMBER - The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (Acres) launched its 'Wild But Not Free' campaign today, empowering Singaporeans to stand up for the victims of the illegal pet trade and put an end to this illicit trade.

As a party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) since 1987, Singapore recognizes that "wild animals in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of the natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come."

Globally, the illegal trading in wildlife, timber and other natural resources is now surpassed only by the trafficking in drugs and weapons. The ongoing illegal pet trade has severe consequences for the survival of every species involved. More than half of the smuggled animals die, and the surviving animals mostly end up living in bad conditions or are mistreated. These animals rarely survive for long in captivity and removing them from their natural habitat damages the fragile ecosystem in which they live as well as threatens the species' existence. Some of the animals, especially primates can also spread diseases to humans.

Most wild animals are prohibited as pets in Singapore. The list of prohibited species includes primates, amphibians, reptiles (except the red-eared slider) many species of birds and some types of fish. It is illegal to import, export, or introduce these species without a permit. The sale or even display of these animals is an offence under Singapore law.

This campaign, which aims to complement and assist the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority's (AVA) efforts in curbing the illegal pet trade, involves a month-long road show to create awareness on the detrimental effects of this trade and a new Acres Wildlife Crime Hotline

The Wildlife Crime Hotline (9783 7782) provides an avenue for those who know of anyone who buys, owns or trades in exotic animals, to blow the whistle on these wildlife traders and buyers.

Tamara Emir, Deputy Executive Director of Acres said: "It's a terrible business and all of us should share the responsibility of protecting the animals who cannot protect themselves. We are urging Singaporeans to play an active role in ending this trade and call us if they know of anyone involved in it".

"I firmly believe in the freedom of animals. I mean... can you imagine being caged up like that? I say... *Do unto others* (well in this case ANIMALS) *as you would have them do unto you*. You should treat animals the same way you would like to be treated. That's only fair right" Irene Ang, local celebrity and founder of FLY Entertainment said. She is one of several celebrities, including Robin Leong, Adrian Pang, Debra Teng, Nadya Hutagalung, Lawrence Wong, April Kian, Catherine Tan, Zachary Mosalle and Angela May who are actively supporting this campaign and were present during the launch to speak to the public and distribute the campaign brochures.

Acres is confident that with the help and support of the public, we can eliminate this cruel trade and put an end to the labelling of Singapore as the centre of the illegal wildlife trade.

Following the road show, Acres will also be conducting a series of undercover investigations to uncover this illicit trade in Singapore.

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## **Notes to editors**

1. Founded by a group of Singaporeans in 2001, Acres is a non-profit organisation aimed at fostering respect and compassion for all animals. Acres's approach to raising animal welfare issue is to focus on education and back up our advocacy with scientific clarity accrued through research. Using our findings, we will inform the public and work towards synergistic partnerships with the authorities and related parties to improve animal welfare.