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**Global Tiger Initiative**  
**World Bank—Smithsonian Institution Partnership Launch**  
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**Dr. Dinerstein's Remarks**

Thank you very much, Steve [Steven L. Monfort, Acting Director, Smithsonian's National Zoo], and it's really a pleasure to be here; and thanks to the Smithsonian and World Bank for inviting me to be part of this really important gathering.

The latest data that my colleagues and I have gathered on the status of wild tigers is extensive, accurate, and alarming. The sad truth is that we're learning a lot more about fewer tigers.

It's now indisputable that wild tigers are experiencing what scientists call the range collapse across the jungles and forests of Asia, and our recent modeling work predicts that the current trajectory that we're on will lead to extinction of many populations.

As we've heard earlier, time is of the essence, and the World Wildlife Fund has made saving the tiger a top priority, and so we offer our strongest support as a founding member of the Global Tiger Initiative. We must achieve transformational results on broad fronts to save tigers, and a key element to move us from range collapse to a range-wide recovery is a field army of well-trained, dedicated professionals.

The World Wildlife Fund network, which operates in 100 countries, fully concurs and applauds the agreement that was signed today between the Smithsonian and the World Bank to rapidly grow a network of wildlife professionals both on the ground and in the seats of power.

Tigers will do their part if we give them half a chance. Tigers and wolves are the two large predators that have the potential to actually breed faster than their prey, and we have well-documented examples and episodes of recovery in several landscapes where tigers have come roaring back from the brink of extinction when we protect tigers, their prey, and their habitats.

The good news is that we still have enough habitat left out there, more than 1.1 million square kilometers, enough to support 20,000 to 30,000 tigers from the 3,500 or so that we have remaining today.

So, a big piece of this recovery effort has to focus on training staff in the right places in the range countries. And I think I have a unique perspective to comment on the value of this new partnership that has been announced here today.

As Steve mentioned, I am a product of the Smithsonian Peace Corps program, and I was sent to Nepal in 1975 ostensibly to study tigers, which I really didn't know very much about, and did the best that I could, but I was sent to a reserve, Bardia National Park, which, at one point, held the highest densities of tigers on earth. Now, sadly, those numbers are down to just a fraction.

I later became a Smithsonian post-doctoral fellow working in Nepal under the auspices of the Conservation and Research Center at Front Royal, and spent five years studying the ecology of rhinoceros and tigers under the famous Smithsonian Tiger Ecology Project, which ran successfully for over 20 years and was one of the landmark wildlife conservation efforts in international arenas.

I later became a mentor, an instructor in Smithsonian programs to train wildlife professionals in the tiger-range countries. My first job, when I came to the World Wildlife Fund two decades ago, was to work as a consultant with the World Bank to set up conservation training programs in many of the tiger-range states—Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Laos.

So, having seen what organizations have achieved working on their own, I'm certain that this new collaboration will really advance tiger conservation.

Still, the news about tigers is really staggering. Too many parks, not just in India, but all across the range, have fewer than 10 resident tigers in them. As you've just heard, several once important tiger reserves like India's Kanha and Sariska, which used to have many tigers, now have none.

We know about the decline largely from the work of dedicated local field scientists who spend their days tracking tigers and tiger prey. These conservation heroes are part of the brigade that will help lead range-wide recovery. But we need many more of them. The transformational results that we envision can only be accomplished with a new generation of conservation leadership.

At the World Wildlife Fund, we've created a program named in honor of our former CEO, Kathryn Fuller, called the Kathryn Fuller Fellows, to support advanced degrees for young scholars who are working in tiger conservation landscapes in their own countries.

The data they start collecting from day one is not just esoteric work that's going to be published four years from now in an obscure journal. The very first day they're out there brings in information that becomes important intel. That goes back to how we manage tiger recovery in the places they're working.

I'd like to share with you what I've dubbed Seidensticker's Rule, named in honor of John Seidensticker, who's sitting right over there, the dean of tiger biologists and certainly my mentor, which goes something like this: Any conservation program is only as strong as the science that informs the policy behind it, and the more energetic, well-trained scientists we have on the ground, the more effective tiger conservation activities will become.

That's what we have to put into practice. So, we envision a strong, mutually supporting link between our World Wildlife Fund programs and efforts that are being conceived here today and in the future between the Smithsonian and the World Bank that we're here to inaugurate.

One of the key tasks of this new cadre of trained professionals will be to monitor the impact of massive and extensive new infrastructure projects on tigers and their habitat. Roads, dams, and other types of infrastructure are being constructed as we speak across Asia and could have massive implications for tigers. In many cases, quite negative ones unless we do this right from the start.

Among the great new opportunities under the Global Tiger Initiative is a team that's led by World Bank environmental engineers that is initiating a review of the way that we approach infrastructure. We must create a new smart design that moves the needle from the present where we are doing harm in many places, to the World Bank's stated position of doing no harm so that we can hope for a future of doing measurable good for tigers. How we quantify that and put that into practice is going to be the work of this collaboration.

Creating new development paradigms with smart designs that include environmental protection and biodiversity protection are as integral to economic prosperity and human well-being as our roads and dams. We have to monitor the efficacy of our progress in this fundamental effort, and so this new generation of conservation leaders being trained under this initiative will do so and be part of the difference between tigers and no wild tigers in some of these landscapes.

Saving wild tigers takes both bottom-up and top-down efforts to advance. From the bottom-up, we need specialists who work effectively with communities to help ensure that tigers and people can coexist. The science we do is important, but one of the wisest biologists I've ever met, Richard Callan from South Africa, once said, "Conservation is 10 percent science, and 90 percent negotiation."

We need field staff trained to negotiate effectively and arm them with powerful enough incentives to engage rural people to want to leave space for tigers. Consider this analogy for a moment: What if we had tigers in this country and that a forest north of here—let's call it Rockville National Park—was an important source population for tigers. Now imagine that Rock Creek Park is the only viable corridor left to allow dispersal of young tigers from Rock Creek National Park to Roosevelt Island Tiger Reserve.

How many of you in the audience who live near Rock Creek Park would be willing to tolerate tigers passing next to your community? Yet, you can see why this idea of the estimate of conservation being 90 percent negotiation is not too far-fetched.

But the analogy puts this into perspective because that's what we're facing in some of the most heavily populated parts of the tigers' range. How do we have the powerful new incentives to make people want to have tigers as neighbors?

I want to give you one example of carbon financing that I think is a powerful. In a groundbreaking program in Nepal, we've done a project called "carbonated tigers," where we're aiming for a win-win with the basic concept being that if we can restore critical tiger habitat, which is forested, at the same time that we're sequestering carbon and provide carbon credit to rural communities, then we can actually benefit all combined.

And so, in this part of Nepal, we have living forests which are vital habitat for tigers where they occur in high-densities, and they're mostly degraded by rural villagers who graze their cattle in there. We removed the cattle and have them stall-fed to provide methane gas for methane gas plants, and then allow the forests to grow back. The tiger prey returns very quickly. The tiger is returned. The forest sequesters carbon. We establish a carbon credit program, which provides income streams to rural communities who now have an economic return powerful enough to want to live next to tigers and allow tigers to disperse between reserves.

If this model works, we need to replicate this as fast as possible, and the help of the World Bank will be vital on this concern.

While we're here today to inaugurate and empower and mobilize efforts on behalf of future conservation leaders, we also have to engage the present leadership of the world at the highest political and economic levels.

And we at the World Wildlife Fund salute President Zoellick in his efforts to bring world leaders together to try and get on their agenda and on their radar the serious plight of wild tigers. His offer last year to host the Year of the Tiger Summit in 2010 has been gathering momentum, and we're really on our way to do that.

The World Wildlife Fund is fully committed to work with the World Bank, Smithsonian, and all our tiger conservation partners to accomplish this historic gathering that we really believe will mark the beginning of a new day for tigers and biodiversity conservation in Asia. Thank you very much.