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9 February 2010

Mr Un-Chan Chung
Prime Minister
Republic of Korea
55 Sejong-no, Jongno-gu,
Seoul, 110-760, Korea

Dear Prime Minister Chung,

We are writing to call for an immediate ban on bear bile products in Korea. Bear bile is not only replaceable by herbal products but it is actually dangerous to the health of consumers. There is a clear medical evidence for this. We also call for an immediate ban on bear farming for bile and for breeding.

We believe now is the time for a visionary project to show the world Korea's ability to resolve this issue.

Given Korea's huge reserves of cash [over 300b USD in foreign cash reserves alone] and its ambition to be seen as an environmental leader and a modern nation we believe the Government has the capacity to avoid the international disgrace which will emerge when the G20 meeting is held here next year when it becomes clearly public that the bear farming practice is booming in Korea. Therefore, we believe the Government should ban farming, compensate farmers and to treat bears at all the farms and relocate them to Government funded and operated sanctuaries for the rest of their lives. These bears should be desexed. Three large sanctuaries would be sufficient to cater for the population. This initiative may seem naïve and unrealistic but this is a nation which when action is mobilised can achieve anything eg rebuilding long destroyed rivers nationally.

On compensation, this should be offered and paid only when delivery of the bears is taken and only on inspection of the farm to ensure it no longer has premises to house bears.

A portion of the compensation should be withheld pending an inspection 6 months later to ensure farming has not recommenced. Farmers should be required to sign releases that subject to them paying back compensation if at any time in the future they are found to be farming bears. Sadly, this is the reality of Korea.

On a practical basis, implementation of this option will involve the need for a project plan that includes construction of sanctuaries, mobilisation of properly trained veterinary resources, transportation and handling logistics. Nevertheless we believe it could be implemented over a two-year time frame. It could receive widespread global media coverage and cement Korea's credentials as a visionary and leading socially and environmentally conscious nation prior to the G20.

We strongly suggest that the Government visit the Animals Asia Foundation Sanctuary in Chengdu as soon as possible to help your officials get a sense of the nature and scale of the task. We also suggest Animals Asia - which has developed extremely good practical knowledge of all issues related to the care of farmer bears be invited to consult to the Korean Government on the planning, budgeting and execution of this initiative along with WSPA. We ask that you at least investigate feasibility of the option. moonbears.org would be happy to take a role in arranging this and providing translation services etc. We also suggest a team of independent monitors oversight implementation of the plan to ensure it is being conducted properly.

This may seem impossibly huge and difficult to you but we have lived and worked in Korea for many years and we know projects of this scale are very possible and, properly marketed, should be accepted by the Government- especially at this critical time for its global reputation. We estimate that an all in cost-including operation of the three sanctuaries and farmer compensation would not exceed 20m USD, which is, less than 0.01 per cent of Korea's foreign cash reserves alone.

We cannot support other options for dealing with bear farming in Korea, mainly for one overriding reason. These options rely on the integrity of the farmers and the effectiveness of regulators. In Korea, there is zero evidence that these animals will be carefully treated, that age limits will be enforced or followed at all so rules on slaughter ages etc are meaningless. The only thing that will work will be a clear financial incentive to farmers. The Government originally provided this in the form of gifted bears to farmers but under our option would be providing it in another form. The Governments obligation to the bears it originally introduced would be well served by allowing them to live out their days.

When, ultimately, all the former farmed bears are gone the sanctuary sites could be utilised for eco tourism or similar purposes and would be an ongoing testament to the coming of age of Korea as a modern, environmentally sensitive and caring nation.

We strongly urge you Minister to consider and implement our recommendations and stand ready to assist their implementation.

Yours sincerely,



G. Moon
Founder
moonbears.org



9 February 2010

Minister Maanee Lee
Ministry of Environment
Republic of Korea
88 Gwanmoon-ro, Gwacheon-si,
Gyeonggi-do, 427-729, Korea

Dear Minister Lee,

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On compensation, this should be offered and paid only when delivery of the bears is taken and only on inspection of the farm to ensure it no longer has premises to house bears.

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When, ultimately, all the former farmed bears are gone the sanctuary sites could be utilised for eco tourism or similar purposes and would be an ongoing testament to the coming of age of Korea as a modern, environmentally sensitive and caring nation.

We strongly urge you Minister to consider and implement our recommendations and stand ready to assist their implementation.

Yours sincerely,



G. Moon
Founder
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9 February 2010

Minister KyungHwan Choi
Ministry of Knowledge Economy
Republic of Korea
88 Gwanmoon-ro, Gwacheon-si,
Gyeonggi-do, 427-729, Korea

Dear Minister Choi,

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