

30th October 2020

To: The Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Application by Biosphere Trading to expand its primate breeding facility and capture long-tailed macaques from the wild

We are writing to express our concern regarding the application by Biosphere Trading Ltd to expand its current breeding facility and to capture long-tailed macaques from the wild.

There is widespread global concern about the plight of the long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) and its persecution and exploitation in Mauritius. The long-tailed macaque has been living on Mauritius for over 400 years. Over this time, these monkeys have become part of the ecosystem. They deserve protection and to be treated humanely, not captured for research purposes.

Our organisations, Action for Primates, Progress Science Mauritius, One Voice and Animal Rights represent many thousands of people from within Mauritius and around the world. Our petitions, that call on the government of Mauritius to 1) deny the application by Biosphere to expand its facility and 2) refuse permission to allow the capture of wild monkeys and 3) to end the involvement of Mauritius in the trade in non-human primates for research, have received over 114,800 signatures (1) (2) (3). Letters and E-mails have also been sent to yourself, other government ministers and Embassies. A protest took place outside the Mauritius Embassy in Brussels and a letter delivered to HE Mr Haymandoyal Dillum. Objections have also been submitted to the Mauritian Economic Development Board website.

Well known Mauritius music artists, including Natty Gong, Mr Love, El Paga, Michael Gino De Virassamy, J SummerSoul, Kan Chan Kin and Sivaramen Marday, as well as radio host Florent Didier Marcel, are also supporting our appeal to the government of Mauritius and raising awareness about this important issue (4).

To allow the capture of wild long-tailed macaques to start up again would, we believe, be a backward step at a time when there is widespread global condemnation of trapping wild non-human primates, especially because of the cruelty and suffering caused by the removal of such animals from their natural habitat, social and family groups. We are also concerned that such a step could lead to the resumption of the large-scale commercial trapping of wild long-tailed macaques in Mauritius.

Several official bodies and organisations, including the European Union, recognise the suffering involved in the capturing of wild non-human primates. For example, the **International Primatological Society** has stated:

“...the capture of nonhuman primates from the wild is stressful for the animals and increases the suffering, risk of injuries, spread of disease and even death during capture, storage and transport” (5)

In a policy statement issued by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** and Ecosystem Conservation Group, there is a recommendation that:

“endangered, vulnerable and rare species be considered for use in biomedical research projects only if they are obtained from existing self-sustaining captive breeding colonies (i.e. in captive breeding, all animals are required to be at least F2 generation)” (6)

The **European Union** recognised that the capture of non-human primates from the wild is highly stressful for the animals concerned and carries an elevated risk of injury and suffering during capture and transport. In order to end the capture of animals from the wild for research, *including for purposes of breeding*, the European Union Directive (2010/63/EU) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes introduced provisions with the objective of moving towards using only non-human primates who have been bred in self-sustaining colonies, from parents who themselves have been bred in captivity (7). The implementation date for these new provisions has been set for 2022.

We are, therefore, shocked that at a time when countries are ending the use of wild-caught non-human primates, both in research and for breeding purposes, one primate company in Mauritius is seeking to expand its breeding facility with the government giving permission for up to 1,000 long-tailed macaques to be caught in the wild. Such a development will, we believe, further tarnish the international reputation of Mauritius.

Further, we wish to draw your attention to the widespread international concerns that exist over the use of non-human primates and other animals in research, the growing scientific arguments against their use and the increasing humane and human relevant alternatives that are becoming available.

There are increasing efforts to move away from the use of non-human primates and other animals in research. For example, a spending bill that would encourage the **US National Institutes of Health** “to accelerate efforts to reduce and replace the use of nonhuman primates with alternative research models” in its laboratories was approved earlier this year. It is now waiting for full approval (8).

Last year, the **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** Administrator signed a directive to prioritize efforts to reduce animal testing. It was also announced that \$4.25 million in funding was provided to five universities to research the development and use of alternative test methods and strategies that reduce, refine, and/or replace vertebrate animal testing (9).

We, therefore, appeal to you and the Government of Mauritius to deny the application by Biosphere Trading Ltd to expand its non-human primate breeding facility and to reject any request to capture wild long-tailed macaques.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Kite, Action for Primates
Jacqueline Talbot, Progress Science Mauritius
Muriel Arnal, One Voice
Dr Jen Hochmuth, Animal Rights

C.C. The Hon Maneesh Gobin, Minister of Agro Industry and Food Security;
Dr. the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and
Development;
The Hon Kavydass Ramano, Minister of Environment.

References:

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5. "Trade in Primates Captured in the Wild" International Primatological Society:
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7. 2010/63/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (Article 10) Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/63/oj>
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