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From Rory Stewart OBE MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs

Dear Keith,

Thank you for your letters of 9 June to me and the Secretary of State about trade in ornamental fish and for providing a copy of your report 'Wild caught ornamental fish: the benefits, the trade, the facts'. I am replying as the Minister responsible for wildlife trade policy.

This comes at an opportune time, with the 17th meeting of the Conference of Parties (CoP17) to the Convention on International Trade (CITES) in Johannesburg fast approaching. Your report of course discusses a much wider trade than just in CITES-listed ornamental fish species but the points you make are clearly very relevant to the CITES community. I agree that sustainable wildlife trade can make a valuable contribution towards the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Your points about the potential benefits of low volume, high value trade in ornamental fish along the supply chain are well made. I also note with interest that tropical and marine species imported are not invasive and do not carry notifiable diseases, so are not problematic from that perspective.

As you are probably aware, the South African Government is hosting a Ministerial meeting prior to CoP17 to discuss the role of CITES in advancing the SDGs and I am sure that many of the same issues as those you have raised in your report will be discussed in that forum.

I would like to thank you for your helpful and informative input into what is undoubtedly a complex subject area, and for your organisation's efforts to encourage best practice in the trade and keeping of ornamental fish.

Rory Stewart

RORY STEWART