

April 9, 2020

Ambassador Cui Tiankai
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the United States of America
3505 International Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Ambassador Cui:

We write to urgently request that China immediately close all operating wet markets that have a potential to expose humans to health risks through the introduction of zoonotic disease into the human population. Gao Fu, the director of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention, has acknowledged that "the origin of the new coronavirus is the wildlife sold illegally in a Wuhan (China) seafood market." It is well documented that wet markets in China have been the source of a number of worldwide health problems, and their operation should cease immediately so as to protect the Chinese people and the international community from additional health risks.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health, recently called for the closing of these markets. He stated that "they should shut down [wet markets] right away. I mean it boggles my mind when we have so many diseases that emanate out of that unusual human animal interface that we don't just shut it down. I don't know what else has to happen to get us to appreciate that. And I think that there are certain countries in which this is very common place. I would like to see the rest of the world really lean with a lot of pressure on those countries that have that because what we are going through right now is a direct result of that."¹ His statement is both true and urgent, and his advice should be followed immediately. We believe China should play an important role in shutting down its wet markets that expose humans to health risks and by urging other countries to do the same.

In the October 2006 issue of Current Opinions in Infectious Diseases, it was found that "in Chinese wet-markets, unique epicenters for transmission of potential viral pathogens, new genes may be acquired or existing genes modified through various mechanisms such as genetic reassortment, recombination and mutation. The wet-markets, at closer proximity to humans, with high viral burden or strains of higher transmission efficiency, facilitate transmission of the viruses to humans."²

¹ <https://video.foxnews.com/v/6146846185001#sp=show-clips>

¹ Patrick Cy Woo 1, Susanna Kp Lau, Kwok-yung Yuen, Current Opinions on Infectious Diseases, 19 (5), 401-7 Oct 2006

Chinese leader Xi Jinping stated that China would “resolutely outlaw and harshly crackdown” on wildlife trafficking. Earlier this year, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, took steps to close the country’s wet markets. In an accompanying statement, the National People’s Congress declared “it is necessary to strengthen market supervision, resolutely ban and severely crack down on illegal wildlife markets and trade, and control major public health risks from the source.” Despite these statements, wet markets in Wuhan and throughout China are back in operation after the recent shut downs.

Therefore we are urging China to shut down all wet markets that allow for interactions between humans and wild animals that pose public health risks. We understand and respect that wet markets are an important component to Chinese society and way of life, but we believe the current moment, which has disrupted everyday life around the world, calls for extreme precautions. We anxiously await your reply to our request.

Sincerely,



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator

/S/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Martha McSally
United States Senator



Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



Mitt Romney
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "R" and a cursive "Scott".

Rick Scott
United States Senator