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ZOO Crisis in Ukraine Needs International Fix

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For immediate release:

Rushing to Rescue Starving Lions in Crimea, Lawrence Anthony Group Pursues Diplomatic Solutions and Appeals for Peaceful Resolution in the Region

Kiev, Ukraine, April 24, 2014—While the crisis in Ukraine escalates on all fronts, the Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization (LAEO), a politically neutral nature conservation non-profit, is giving a voice (and meat) to at-risk lions and tigers in Crimea, in addition to thousands of other zoo animals in Ukraine threatened with starvation in the midst of the turmoil. LAEO's latest delivery of 3.5 tons of meat to Crimea demanded navigating through military checkpoints and a tetchy border crossing to save more than 62 lions and other big cats residing at the Taigan Animal Safari Park. In spite of their victory over this hurdle, the urgent need continues, "If these animals had not gotten the meat soon they would have begun to die horrible deaths in a matter of days; but we're still in

crisis mode because that is only enough for 7 days,” said Barbara Wiseman, LAEO’s International President. When LAEO contacted the Crimea safari park director Mr. Oleg Zubkov, they found him distraught over the situation having just returned from Moscow to plead with government officials to reopen zoo bank accounts so food could be purchased. He reported that Moscow officials expressed sympathy and said they would work on it but did not provide an aid timeline. The Park Director also said he had to start slaughtering his domestic/petting zoo animals, goats and so forth to keep the lions alive. In the face of the gravity of the circumstances, LAEO US raised emergency funds to cover short term needs while working to establish diplomatic channels into Russia to free up Taigan Park’s funds. “We have secured the necessary authorizations, an ethical supplier giving us a reasonable price for the meat, and worked with Mr. Zubkov to truck certified meat across the border as quickly as possible so these big cats didn’t starve,” said Wiseman. “But what we can afford right now is only enough to keep this large pride in food for a few more days.” Promoting cooperative interdependent life support for Ukraine and Russia, the LAEO’s Ukraine Director Lionel de Lange said, “They are all just innocent victims of this international conflict. We’ve had to basically adopt close to ten thousand animals that are in dire straits in Ukrainian zoos, and now, also, these carnivores with very expensive diets in the Taigan Park.” De Lange reports they have now delivered over 16.5 tons of food for the country’s zoo animals in the past 3 weeks, but say purchasing logistics are becoming increasingly difficult and arranging

travel to Crimea for the vulnerable lions was quite complicated.

According to BBC News last week <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26994303> the animal park's funds were blocked with the Ukraine bank shut down, leaving no means of sustaining the animals.

Wiseman concluded, "While, people, animals and the environment are horribly impacted by these international conflicts, the animals have no voice in it and are utterly dependent upon rational or irrational human judgment. We are urging for peace and cooperative co-existence while speaking on behalf of these animals to Ukraine, Russia, Europe, the United States, the UN and all stakeholders involved in this crisis. Until a resolution is reached, we are appealing for help from caring world citizens to keep these magnificent creatures alive."

Famous for his rescue of Iraq war-impacted zoo animals in Bagdad, and his pivotal part in peace negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army and various governments to save the last remaining northern white Rhino's in the Congo, Lawrence Anthony was no stranger to the challenges of safeguarding forgotten animals during international clashes. "You can't separate man from the animal kingdom," he said. "We have ethical responsibilities: if you are going to cage wildlife, you have to take responsibility. During the invasion of Iraq, only 30 out of 650 animals at the Bagdad Zoo had survived by the time I got there." See CBS interview

at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46fQBDfYAJ0>



April 24, 2014–Happy Crimea Lion’s eating lamb meat just delivered by Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization. The 6000 pounds of meat delivered today will last only 7 days, please help sustain these magnificent creatures until a permanent solution is put in place.

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* For anyone interested in making a donation, they may do so online by going to: <http://www.earthorganization.com/Donate.aspx?Type=Donate> and select project “**Zoos in Ukraine**” as the project to make a donation to.

Press Kit: <http://whywebpr.com/theearthorg>

Photos available by calling or writing Barbara@TheEarthOrganization.org

Additional Factsoids:

- Crimea’s Taigan Park has more than 1000 animals in addition to their 62 big cats who consume 500KG of meat per day at a cost of \$1280 per day. Mr. Oleg

Zubkov also owns the Yalta Zoo with 800 animals. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utH5rpIODTU>

- Also receiving support from LAEO is: Nikolaev Zoo (5,735 animals), Mezhygor'ye [exiled ex-President Yanukovich's private zoo] (over 2,000 animals), and the Askania Nova Biosphere Reserve.
- LAEO has to raise \$5000 a day to cover these costs. Both LAEO US and Ukraine say they are barely staying ahead of these demands and are urgently looking for more funding sources.
- No other organizations have offered assistance, funding through government authorities is non-existent and the prospect of funds coming in from paying tourist attendance is very bleak. <http://news.vice.com/articles/zoo-animals-are-the-latest-victims-in-the-ukraine-crisis>
- More news, photos, and information on the LAEO Ukraine initiative may be found online, at www.LAEOUkraine.org. For anyone interested in making a donation, they may do so online by going to <http://www.earthorganization.com/Donate.aspx?Type=Donate> and selecting project "Zoos in Ukraine" as the project to make a donation to.
- **ABOUT LAWRENCE ANTHONY & BARBARA WISEMAN**

Lawrence Anthony, an international conservationist, environmentalist, and bestselling author had a reputation for bold conservation initiatives. Dr. Anthony, the only noncombatant allowed into Baghdad in 2003 during the first several weeks of the coalition invasion, made international headlines with his heroic zoo rescue initiative in Baghdad which will soon be the subject of a Hollywood movie based on the book: "Babylon's Ark", co-written by Anthony and Graham Spence.

Based on their experiences with Baghdad, Mr. Lawrence Anthony and Mrs. Barbara Wiseman established The Earth Organization to expand their conservation work which employs unique cooperative approaches to solving environmental situations using a methodology described by their coined term: Cooperative Ecology.

Also drawing world-wide notice was Anthony's famous herd of traumatized wild elephants that became intensely loyal to him, and were featured in Anthony's bestselling book: "The Elephant Whisperer". One of the many extraordinary events between Anthony and the elephants recently reported is when the herd walked 12 miles to his Thula Thula game reserve residence after having an uncanny, sixth-sense perception of his unexpected death. The herd appeared and stood outside the perimeter fence mourning his death with the family nearby for several hours and has since returned to

the house on its anniversary for the past two years.
(17 September 1950 – 2 March 2012)

Serving as International President since its inception in 2003, Barbara Wiseman continues expanding the presence and work of the organization.

ABOUT LIONEL DE LANGE

De Lange, a 48-year-old retired businessman and successful entrepreneur who relocated to Ukraine found himself in an animal care-giving role after providing food for abandoned stray animals and rescuing a puppy hit by a car outside his home in the city of Nikolaev. De Lange says he did not set out on this course to start an organization, but once finding out more about Lawrence Anthony's conservation work, he decided to take the problem on and help the zoos build something more economically sustainable.

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