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July 10, 2013

Washington, **BC** 20515-0502

Secretary John F. Kerry U.S. Department of State 2201 C Street, N.W. Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

Congratulations again on your recent appointment as Secretary of State. I hope that you are able to continue the leadership on conservation issues that you demonstrated during your tenure in the United States Senate.

I am writing to express my concern about the safety of conservation workers in Costa Rica, in light of recent crimes against Americans and others working on its beaches. I urge you to encourage the Costa Rican government to seek out the perpetrators of these crimes and to increase safety measures for conservationists working to protect sea turtles.

The beaches of Costa Rica are critical breeding grounds for several turtle species protected under the Endangered Species Act, including leatherback sea turtles. During the breeding season for these turtles, Costa Rican and foreign conservationists work to safeguard the turtles' nests from poachers. These conservation activities often occur in remote areas where the workers and volunteers are vulnerable to threats from poachers and drug smugglers. On May 31, 2013, a group of conservationists that included three Americans, a Spaniard, and a Costa Rican, were abducted while patrolling a beach on Costa Rica's Atlantic coast. While the Americans and Spaniard were fortunate to escape their captors, Jairo Mora Sandoval of Costa Rica was killed.

As of this letter, the perpetrators of these violent crimes have yet to be apprehended by the Costa Rican government. Although the presence of police officers has increased, it is my understanding that they are not sufficiently equipped to patrol and apprehend poachers or drug smugglers on the beaches. I know that you will share my concerns, and I ask that you urge the Costa Rican government to fully investigate these crimes and to ensure the safety of conservationists of all nationalities who are serving as stewards of precious natural resources.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

ARED HUFFMAN