

June 28, 2010

Contact: Jennifer Mullin  
202-420-1509 Cell  
[jmullin@gpgdc.com](mailto:jmullin@gpgdc.com)

## **STATEMENT FROM PANTHERA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LUKE HUNTER ON REPORTS THAT LION BURGERS BEING EATEN TO “CELEBRATE” WORLD CUP**

**NEW YORK, NY** – Big cat biologist and Executive Director of [Panthera](#), [Dr. Luke Hunter](#), released the following statement today in regards to reports that Cameron Selogie’s Il Vinaio restaurant in Mesa, AZ, continues to sell burgers made with lion meat in “honor” of the World Cup.

**“It’s ironic that a restaurant in Arizona is celebrating the World Cup by eating lions when their meat is almost never eaten in Africa. Lions are now officially classified as ‘vulnerable’ by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which is only one step away from being endangered, and we are on the verge of losing them entirely in most of West Africa.**

**“Most people probably don’t know that lions have been wiped out from more than 80 percent of their historical range, mainly from illegal hunting. While Ghana may have won their World Cup match against the United States this past weekend, African lions continue to lose. If someone feels the need to sit down and eat a lion burger, the least they can do is send a check for the same amount to save lions in Africa.”**

### **Background on Dr. Luke Hunter**

Dr. Luke Hunter has conducted fieldwork on large cats in Africa since 1992, and is currently developing a conservation strategy for lions across their African range. He also serves as Executive Director of [Panthera](#). Prior to his appointment, he headed the Great Cats Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society, and held positions in universities in Australia and South Africa. His other current projects include assessing the effects of sport hunting and illegal persecution on leopards outside protected areas and the first intensive study of Persian leopards and the last surviving Asiatic cheetahs in Iran.

Hunter’s doctorate examined the behavior and ecology of reintroduced cheetahs and lions in South Africa, and evaluated the effectiveness of reintroduction as a tool to re-establish populations of large cats. Hunter has contributed to 80 scientific papers and popular articles, and has written five books. He is currently completing his sixth book, *A Field Guide to Carnivores of the World*, to be released in early 2011.

###