



HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL



PRESS INFORMATION

Brussels, 1 July 2008

Paul McCartney supports demonstrators in call for ban on trade in seal products

To download free to use pictures and footage of today's successful demonstration, visit www.eurogroupforanimals.org/demonstration.htm

Rock legend Paul McCartney joined concerned citizens from all over Europe in their call for a strong EU ban on the trade in seal products as they demonstrated outside the offices of the European Commission in Brussels today. Organised by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Humane Society International (HSI), GAIA and Eurogroup for Animals, the peaceful demonstration attracted people from across the European Union and beyond, including countries such as Germany, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary, Finland, UK, Sweden, Italy, and Croatia.

The Commission is expected to publish a proposal on a possible ban soon. The date of the demonstration was selected to coincide with the start of the French presidency and the start of the Namibian seal hunt, which is the second largest one in the world.

Paul McCartney paid tribute to the demonstrators in a surprise video message shown on a screen. The dedicated animal welfare supporter said: "Stopping the import of seal fur into the European Union could really put an end to this brutality once and for all – please ask the EU to ban this terrible trade today."

The crowd held a minute's silence in honour of the millions of seals that have been killed in the last few decades, and blew whistles to show their disapproval with the hunt. European parliamentarians also came on stage to show their support for a robust and comprehensive trade ban across the European Union.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, said: "The fact that people turned up in such large numbers from all over the EU for today's demonstration, shows the strength of feeling against the seal hunt. European citizens are not willing to support this deadly trade."

Lesley O'Donnell, director of IFAW EU office, said: "Year after year our observers record unimaginable levels of animal cruelty out on the ice floes during Canada's huge commercial seal hunt, which is not only unacceptable but an entirely useless and wasteful activity. Europeans want no part of this."

Mark Glover, director of HSI UK, said: "It is now up to the Commission to take the next step, and propose a ban that would help speed up the end of the seal hunt."

Michel Vandebosch, president of GAIA, added: "No doubt an EU-wide ban is the way forward to end this unacceptable and indefensible cruelty."

Pictures and footage released at simultaneous press events all over Europe on 25 April demonstrated why the seal hunt could never be humane. The graphic evidence taken during the annual hunt in Canada earlier this year showed hunters ignoring the regulations, failing to kill seals quickly, and hooking and hoisting live seals into boats.

Animal welfare organisations and MEPs are not calling for an end to traditional Inuit seal hunting (in accordance with humane animal welfare standards) which only accounts for a very small proportion of the harp seals hunted in Canada. The ban only addresses the large scale commercial seal hunting, and includes seal products derived from commercial hunts elsewhere, such as in Namibia and Russia.

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For more information call Steven Blaakman, press officer at Eurogroup for Animals, on 0032 (0)27400823 or email him on s.blaakman@eurogroupforanimals.org. Outside office hours please call 0032 (0)475 731066.

Alternatively call Günther Pauls, communications officer at IFAW EU, on 0032 (0) 282 0693 or email him on gpauls@ifaw.org. Outside office hours please call 0032 (0)473 86 34 61. Also available is HSI spokeswoman Dr Jo Swabe on 00 31 651 317 004

Notes:

- Eurogroup for Animals represents animal welfare organisations in nearly all European member states. Since it was launched in 1980, the organisation has succeeded in encouraging the European Union to adopt higher legal standards of animal protection. For more information about Eurogroup, visit www.eurogroupforanimals.org.
- The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is one of the world's largest animal welfare and conservation charities, which is dedicated to improving the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitats, and assisting animals in distress. For more about IFAW, visit www.ifaw.org.
- The Humane Society International (HSI) is one of the world's largest animal protection groups, and addresses issues such as inhumane practices and conditions affecting companion and farm animals, illegal trade in wildlife, threats to endangered species, slaughter of marine mammals, and the use of animals in research and testing. For more information, visit www.hsi.org.
- GAIA, or Global Action in the Interest of Animals, unites human defenders of animal welfare and advocates and advocates against animal abuse in Belgium. Brussels based GAIA was the leading Belgian organisation successfully campaigning for the Belgian ban on the trade of all seals products of all species of seals. For more information, visit www.gaia.be.
- A ban on seal products is widely supported by European parliamentarians. In 2006 425 MEPs signed a resolution to urge the Commission to ban the trade in seal products.
- Belgium, the Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia, the US and Mexico have already banned seal products, while Germany and Italy are planning a ban.