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## PRESS INFORMATION

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**Brussels, 17 June 2008**

### **International demonstration to call for strong ban on seal products**

Campaigners from across Europe will be travelling to Brussels on 1 July to demonstrate in support of an unconditional EU-wide ban on the trade in all seal products. Organised by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), Humane Society International (HSI), GAIA and Eurogroup for Animals, the demonstration will take place outside the offices of the European Commission, to urge them to impose a strong ban now.

The Commission is expected to adopt a proposal on a possible ban this year. Environment commissioner Stavros Dimas said in April they would go ahead if countries were unable to prove the animals were being killed humanely. Since the evidence has shown again and again that the seal hunt is inherently inhumane, campaigners are urging the Commission to install an unconditional ban.

The demonstration will feature people from all over the European Union.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, said: "We are expecting people to come from all over Europe as they feel so passionately about the seal hunt. Already we have had a good response from our 41 member organisations, which represent countries throughout the European Union. People can't wait to speak out against this mass killing of defenceless animals."

Lesley O'Donnell, director IFAW EU office, said: "Never before has there been a better time to call for a ban. The Commission is only weeks away from making a decision on a ban, and the demonstration will show how strongly Europeans feel about the killing of seals for commercial purposes."

Mark Glover, director of HSI UK, said: "Again and again documentary evidence has proved the seal hunt is and always will be inherently inhumane. European citizens no longer want to support this cruel practice."

Michel Vandenbosch, 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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Notes:

- The demonstration will start at 1pm outside the offices of the European Commission in Rue de la Loi in Brussels.
- 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](http://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](http://www.ifaw.org).
- The Humane Society International (HSI) 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](http://www.hsi.org).
- GAIA, or Global Action in the Interest of Animals, unites defenders of animal welfare 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](http://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 all seal products.
- Belgium, the Netherlands, Croatia, Slovenia, the US and Mexico have already banned seal products, while Germany and Italy are planning to do so.
- This year, more than 200,000 seals have been killed in the Canadian hunt alone.

