

**Посол Российской Федерации
в Великобритании**

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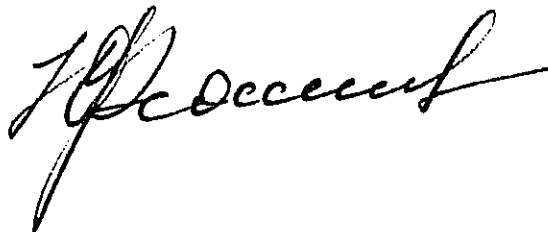
Dear Dr Lucas,

Further to my letter of 13 March 2009 I would like to draw your attention to the fact that on Wednesday 18 March 2009 the Minister of Natural Resources and Ecology of the Russian Federation Mr. Yury Trutnev announced a complete ban on hunting of all harp seals less than one year of age.

“The bloody seal slaughter, the killing of the defenceless animals, which can’t be even called a ‘hunt’, is now prohibited in the Russian Federation as it is in most developed countries. It is a serious step toward the conservation of biodiversity in Russia”, said Mr. Trutnev.

The correspondent order was issued on the same day, amending the Code of Conduct for the Northern Fishing Basins adopted by the Russian Federal Fisheries Agency in February 2009. Formerly, this document prohibited the hunt for female seals in places where these animals delivered pups, as well as the hunt for seal pups younger than two weeks. The ban on hunting seals less than one year of age is seen as a welcome step in Russia by numerous NGOs, including the International Fund for Animal Welfare. Ms. Maria Vorontsova, Director of IFAW Russia, said in an interview that the IFAW was “extremely pleased that the Russian government finally completed its pledge to protect harp seals”.

Sincerely yours,

 Yury Fedotov

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