

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

**Green Party MEP
for the South East of England**

Commissioner Stavros Dimas
Commissioner for the Environment
European Commission
Rue de la Loi, 200
Bruxelles 1049

7 March 2007

Dear Commissioner,

Commission response to Written Declaration on Banning Seal Products in the EU

As co-sponsors of declaration of the European Parliament on banning seal products in the European Union [EP reference: P6-DCL(2006)0038 / _TA-PROV (2006)0369] we have been disappointed to learn that instead of bringing forward a legislative proposal as was called for through the declaration, the Commission plans to conduct a further study to investigate killing methods employed during the annual Canadian seal hunt, and that this study may take years to complete.

You will be aware that the declaration received unprecedented support in the European Parliament and its primary aim was to seek legislation banning the import into the EU of seal products. In view of that we would be particularly unhappy if the Commission's response to the declaration amounted only to a study of the hunt rather than legislative action.

Over the past twelve months, many member states have chosen to seek their own solutions:

in March 2006 Italy introduced a temporary suspension of the marketing of seal products after adopting two parliamentary resolutions calling for a ban in 2004 - 2005;

in January 2007 Belgium introduced a full ban on the import of seal products;

in February 2007 the UK Minister for trade released a written statement saying that the Government is deeply concerned about the reported cruelty of the Canadian seal hunt and that the UK will press the European Commission to put forward an EU wide ban on harp and hooded seal products;

in February 2007, following votes in the German Parliament and publication of a German Veterinary Association statement condemning the cruelty of the hunt, the German Agriculture Minister issued a statement saying that after repeatedly urging the EU to prohibit seal imports and growing tired of inaction, he will introduce a national ban;

in the coming weeks, the Netherlands is expected to introduce a full ban following the national Parliament's legislative proposal being converted recently into a Government proposal.

In addition to this member state activity, in November 2006 the Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a Recommendation calling on Parties to introduce bans on seal derived products, and in September 2006, the European Parliament also signalled a desire to see seal products banned through adoption of its Resolution on the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006 - 2010.

The level of support for a ban is clear: these Governments and Parliamentarians are satisfied that sufficient information on the seal hunt has been amassed and that the next step is to ban imports. In the light of this, and the level of public concern for the welfare of animals, it would be a severe disappointment to us should the Commission act only to delay a decision by requesting a further study.

We respectfully request, therefore, that you respond to the declaration by bringing forward a legislative proposal to ban seal imports at the earliest opportunity. If a new study is still to be carried out, we ask that you introduce a temporary moratorium on the import of seal products, with immediate effect, which can remain in place while further evidence is gathered over the coming years.

Yours sincerely,

Mojca Drcar Murko MEP

Karl-Heinz Florenz MEP

Caroline Lucas MEP

Paulo Casaca MEP

Carl Schlyter MEP

Letter also sent to Commissioner Markos Kyprianou