

Brussels, 16 JUN 2004  
PMA/da A:26549/ D:8995

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP  
European Parliament  
Office 8G103  
Rue Wiertz  
1047 Brussels

Dear Dr Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2004 regarding the Seal Directive 83/129/EEC. This Directive was adopted in order to respond to concerns about the population status of the harp and hooded seals, in particular the effect of non-traditional hunting on the conservation and population status of hooded seals.

I fully understand the animal welfare concerns with respect to the annual seal hunt in Canada. However, the Commission has no evidence that the conservation status of the species is threatened by the quotas set by Canada for the seal hunting.

Available scientific information on the seal population in Canada does not prove any significant negative effect of hunting on the conservation of the targeted species. The Canadian Government regularly submits its quotas for international scrutiny. Canada has also stated that the entire hunt would be monitored by enforcement officers to ensure humane hunting practices and that commercial harvesting of the baby seal pups would continue to be prohibited.

With respect to the seal hunt in the Russian Federation, the harvest is regulated by Russia and Norway based on scientific advice from ICES (*International Council for the Exploration of the Seas*). The Commission is not aware of any specific management plan or of how the harvest is regulated in detail. However, according to the latest scientific information from 2003, the current harvest does not appear to have negative effects on the conservation status of the seal population. Nevertheless, the Commission intends to raise this issue at a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Environment under the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement with Russia.

The Commission, therefore, does not see any scientific basis currently for proposing the extension of the above-mentioned Directive, which prohibits the import in the EU of products derived from the pups of whitecoat harp seals and hooded seals (blue-backs), to cover adult seals.

Yours sincerely,

  
Margot WALLSTRÖM