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ON THE WELFARE
& CONSERVATION
OF ANIMALS**

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Established 1983

Mr. Stravos Dimas
Member of the Commission of the European Communities
Commissioner for Environment
BERL 11/106
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 26 February 2008

Dear Commissioner Dimas

The European Union adopted Directive 1999/22/EC, relating to the keeping of animals in zoos, in March 1999. This ensured that the European Union would move towards meeting its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through requiring licensed zoos (as defined) to strengthen their role in the conservation of biodiversity.

By April 2002, the first fifteen Member States were obliged to incorporate these requirements into national legislation and to ensure their zoos were regularly inspected, licensed and fulfilled their statutory roles. In January 2008, following enlargement, all 27 Member States were required to ensure their zoos were suitably compliant.

The Intergroup for Animal Welfare and Conservation acknowledges the importance of the Directive but has recently learned that implementation and enforcement of the Directive in many Member States is defective and in some cases, no more than cursory. Furthermore, the *Intergroup* has been provided with evidence that raises concerns relating to the current practices and actions taken (or not taken) by certain zoos, which appear to be in breach of their duty of care to their animals. In light of such evidence, which is outlined below, I would urge the Commission to undertake an evaluation of the implementation and efficacy of the Directive and consider what revisions are necessary to ensure our obligations to the species concerned are fully met.

A recent study by *Eurogroup for Animals* focuses on the way the Directive was transposed in some EU Member States and shows that the majority of national laws lack detailed provisions concerning scientific and educational activities. A few countries also lack detailed provisions concerning welfare standards and this fact can jeopardize the implementation of the Directive due to the lack of appropriate criteria to inspect and license zoos. In recent years *Eurogroup for Animals* has also provided evidence that the deadline for Member States to inspect and license zoos in their country was not being respected.

Furthermore, the inspection and licensing of Europe's zoos has suffered from lack of political will and commensurate delays.

ENDCAP, a pan-European coalition of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which specialises in the welfare and protection of wild animals in captivity, has provided additional evidence that supports the findings of the *Eurogroup* report. Evidence following visits and evaluation of zoos has revealed that conditions in many zoos throughout Europe apparently fail to meet minimum legal requirements. Conditions in many zoos may also be directly detrimental to the welfare of the animals.

The Commission has already taken action against Spain for non-compliance with the Directive, following an official complaint in 2006. However, evidence presented to the *Intergroup* by *ENDCAP* has indicated that such problems may not be limited to Spain. *ENDCAP* is currently compiling evidence from across Europe that demonstrates the extent of the problem.

Despite the implementation of Directive 1999/22/EC, and its requirements for zoos to accommodate their animals under conditions that aim to "satisfy the biological and conservation requirements of the individual species", there are still countless examples of wild animals enduring conditions of extreme deprivation and suffering in European zoos.

As Chair of the European Parliament's *Intergroup for Animal Welfare and Conservation*, I feel it is my duty to try and ensure that all of Europe's licensed zoos keep their animals according to the highest standards of animal welfare and husbandry. It is for this reason that I appeal to the Commission to seek ways of amending the Directive to ensure that standards of animal welfare and keeper training are significantly improved. Such a move would conform with the Commission's own agenda, encompassed by **The Action Plan for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010**.

Since 1999 and the drafting of the Zoos Directive, European citizens have become more aware of issues concerning captive wild animal welfare. Consequently, my constituents and those of many of my colleagues consistently call for standards of welfare and compliance to be raised. Significantly, this has influenced the drafting of animal welfare legislation in many Member States. On behalf of the *Intergroup*, I therefore feel that the time is right for the Commission to recognise the public mood, acknowledge the current inconsistencies in enforcement and accept that we are failing to meet our obligations to animals in zoos.

I would strongly urge you to meet with Daniel Turner, co-ordinator to the *ENDCAP* coalition of NGOs, who has brought many of these issues to my attention. The evidence he has at his disposal will, I am sure, convince you of the need to support action on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Neil Parish
President

Cc: Daniel Turner
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