
FOLKETINGET



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Mr. Cristian-Silviu Busoi
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Trade in Seal Products

March 24th, 2015

Honourable Mr. Busoi.

Contact

The Parliament of Denmark and the Parliament of Greenland are pleased to learn that you have been selected as rapporteur for the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1007/2009 on trade in seal products.

Mr. Johan Lund Olsen
Committee Chairman

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On behalf of the Greenland Committee, the Environment Committee and the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament as well as the Fisheries-, Hunting- and Agriculture Committee and the Foreign- and Security Policy Committee of the Greenlandic Parliament I would like to express deep concern regarding the tremendous negative impact this proposal will have for seal hunting and hunter families in Greenland. With this joint letter we would like to draw your attention to a couple of aspects:

As you may already know, in Greenland, the seals are a vital resource in the often very remotely located communities and the indigenous people in this part of the World have utilized seals for food, clothes, fuel, cultural items and revenue for centuries. We urge you to make sure that this proposal from the European Commission complies with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

It is important for us to stress that seal hunting in Greenland is managed in a responsible way by the Government of Greenland, based on international scientific advice, and widely regarded as biologically sustainable. A report documenting this was published by WWF Denmark in December 2013. Besides, Greenland Institute of Natural Resources has conducted extensive research on the seals and their habitat in Greenland and their conclusions are clear: seal hunting in Greenland is biologically sustainable. Attached to this letter you'll find the WWF report as well as papers from the Government of Greenland with facts and numbers about seal hunting in Greenland.

None of the sealskins that are exported from Greenland come from endangered species. The seals' status are "Least Concern" according to the Greenland Red List. Besides, seal hunting in Greenland should not be regarded as in conflict with animal welfare, since the most common method is shooting the seals by rifle.

The seal hunt and the sealskin trade in Greenland has been challenged over the past four decades. First by anti-sealing campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s and later by the European Union's and other countries' import bans on seal products. Although the Inuit subsistence hunt of seals has been exempted from the European bans in the 2009 regulations, the bans nevertheless have resulted in a dramatic decrease in sales of sealskin from Greenland. This is probably due to a lack of knowledge amongst the European consumers about how seal hunting is carried out in Greenland. The hunters, their families and the business in Greenland are severely affected by this, as described in the attached White Paper from the Government of Greenland.

The parliaments of Greenland and Denmark are deeply concerned that this new proposal from the European Commission will exacerbate this situation. At the moment Greenland's economy is under pressure and there is a need to find new income sources. In this context the new proposal is a step in the wrong direction, as it will make it even more difficult for hunters in Greenland to trade their seal products. We also fear that the new proposal will be followed by similar bans from countries outside the EU, making the consequences even worse.

We do not think that it is the way forward to further limit the possibilities for the hunters in Greenland to trade their seal products. Instead we suggest that the European Commission should (1) examine what consequences the bans of seal products have for the inhabitants in Greenland, and (2) conduct a thorough informational process to inform the public as well as official levels of the European societies, that the seal product import ban contains an Inuit-exemption and that seal hunting in Greenland is performed in a biologically sustainable and responsible way.

That would be in harmony with the spirit of the newly signed Joint Declaration of March 19th 2015 between the European Union, on the one hand, and the Government of Greenland and the Government of Denmark, on the other, on relations between the European Union and Greenland.

Finally we are concerned about the time schedule for the proposal at the European Parliament. We are aware that the WTO report was finalized in June 2014. We are concerned that the European Commission has taken quite a long time to prepare this new proposal, which leaves the European Parliament with a very short timeframe to assess the proposal. For Greenland as well as

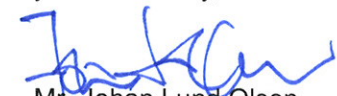
for Denmark this issue is of great importance and we hope you will consider our points of view when drafting your report.

Should you wish for further information and facts from the ground on seal hunting, please do not hesitate to contact us. Moreover a delegation from the Danish Parliament would like to visit Brussels in week 17 (before deadline for amendments to your report) where we hope that you will be available for a meeting where we can discuss these matters further.

If time allows, we also suggest you to pay a visit to Greenland and would be most delighted to help organizing such a field visit as well as for meetings with you in Greenland.

On behalf of the Greenland Committee, the Environment Committee and the European Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament as well as the Fisheries-, Hunting- and Agriculture Committee and the Foreign- and Security Policy Committee of the Greenlandic Parliament,

yours sincerely,



Mr. Johan Lund Olsen
Chairman, the Greenland Committee
Parliament of Denmark