



## Intergroup/Intergroupe/Intergruppe at the European Parliament

SUSTAINABLE HUNTING, BIODIVERSITY, COUNTRYSIDE ACTIVITIES, AGRICULTURE & FOREST  
CHASSE DURABLE, BIODIVERSITÉ, ACTIVITÉS RURALES, AGRICULTURE & FORET  
NACHHALTIGE JAGD, BIODIVERSITÄT, LÄNDLICHE AKTIVITÄTEN, LANDWIRTSCHAFT & WALD  
CACCIA SOSTENIBILE, BIODIVERSITÀ, ATTIVITÀ RURALI, AGRICOLTURA & FORESTA  
CAZA SOSTENIBLE, BIODIVERSIDAD, ACTIVIDADES RURALES, AGRICULTURA & FORESTA



### Intergroup 'Sustainable Hunting, Biodiversity, Countryside Activities & Forest' Strasbourg, 25.11.2009

Room / Salle / Raum N 3.2 - 15h30-16h30

“The role of hunters in Biodiversity”

« Le rôle des chasseurs dans la biodiversité »

„Die Rolle der Jäger in der Biodiversität“

#### 1. Opening remarks / Mots de bienvenue / Begrüßung

#### MEP Véronique MATHIEU (FR) - Intergroup President / Président / Präsident

Ms. Mathieu was pleased to welcome the participants for the first meeting of this Intergroup. She stressed the need to vote in the Intergroup polls and explained that the main theme of the meeting was the role of hunters in Biodiversity. She recalled that 2010 will be the international year of Biodiversity. The last Commission report was very critical and she underlined the relatively weak role of the Commission in the past. The European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP) will have to go further on this topic. Hunters have a very important role to play in this regard and this must not be forgotten.

She thanked all the participants and speakers for coming.

#### MEP Robert STURDY (Chairman)

Mr. Sturdy thanked Ms Mathieu for her work in the EP for the last ten years. He explained that 99.9 % of persons who hunt have a direct interest in Biodiversity. He gave the example of an Inuit in the north of the arctic circle who reintroduced several species after the fire destruction of its territories. Since his community lives from the products of its surrounding environment, this tragedy had terrible consequences on their lives. He is now able to hunt again to nourish his family. We need to reaffirm that 95% of hunters actually eat what they have hunted.

The Chairman's conclusion is to take care of the countryside, making sure the countryside survives in a prosperous way. Mr. Sturdy reintroduced species of birds on his farm that were disappearing not because of hunting activities but because of bad practices of farming due to the lack of knowledge and due to the rush to produce more food.

1

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### 2. Main topic / *Thème principal* / Hauptthema:

- **Joseph Van der STEGEN** – European Commission, DG Environment, B3

According to Mr. Van der STEGEN, issues regarding hunting are often passionate and sensitive. However, they deserve an objective debate for the sake of safeguarding nature.

#### Context:

Biodiversity is essential for the health of our planet. The recent economic development leads to loss of biodiversity. Urbanization is to blame as well as farming, fishing and sometimes hunting. Natura 2000 includes some of the most beautiful habitats in Europe and covers 70% of its territory. It is the cornerstone of the EU biodiversity policy and plays a major role in fulfilling the EU commitments to stopping/reversing the loss by 2010. Such projects are important to prevent the loss of biodiversity. Mankind is part of Nature and the two best work in partnership. Like Commissioner Dimas said: Natura 2000 consists of living landscapes in which farming, fishing, forestry and hunting can continue.

#### The role of Hunters

Hunters will be part of the solution if they bring an added value to environmental quality in rural areas. They manage habitats and contribute to the restoration of habitats. They invest time and money to the benefit of many species. They have excellent knowledge of the species present of their territories. The contribution of hunters to biodiversity and the economy can be significant. The relation between biodiversity and hunting can create a real win-win situation. That is the reason why the EC has set up the Sustainable Hunting Initiative years ago.

Mr. Van der Stegen stressed the major outcomes of the 2004 Birdlife and FACE agreement and of the conference on “the promotion of Natura 2000 and sustainable wildlife use” organized by FACE and ELO which took place at the DG ENVI on the 17th and 18th of November 2009. The participants all agreed that wildlife users offer a real potential for nature conservation and should take responsibility for management conservation.

#### How can hunting contribute to biodiversity?

Confidence and trust must prevail just as transparency and the respect for regulations. Long term consideration should prevail over short term interest. Close cooperation between land managers should be encouraged. Hunters can provide statistical data on targeted species that are of significant importance.

Mr. Van der Stegen recalled that migratory species deserve a big interest in the biodiversity debate. This question deserves special attention and hunters share responsibility. Direct and indirect impacts should be taken into account.

2





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Finally, communication and training for a better understanding of what is at stake is essential. We need to encourage partnership with other organizations. On the whole, hunters have a key role to play for biodiversity, just as the Sustainable Hunting Initiative has proved. The EC looks forward to continue the work with the hunting community.

### Conclusion

Further synergies should be developed at all levels and with all stakeholders.

- **Tamás MARGHESCU** – Former IUCN Regional Director Europe

Tamás Marghescu has a forestry background. It was a duty to have a hunting licence. In his position at IUCN, he stood up for sustainable hunting and recalled that back in time, life was about eating or being eaten. The Director General of FAO said that food is a basic human right, therefore Mr Marghescu argues that hunting is a basic human right as well.

Hunting created the first protected areas for nature conservation and we can look back on history on protected nature through hunting. Importance is given to hunters for their role in nature conservation: huntable species are also part of the ecosystem. Protection of the species means the protection of the habitat. The very basic interest of hunters is to conserve biodiversity which comes from the fact that they are hunting in biodiversity. Game species are part of the ecosystem.

The study which will be released by IUCN (TEEB 1) will be very important. They are coming up with figures of the value of nature. You need the economic argument to really protect the resources and convince the politicians. We need the economic value of hunting to conserve nature. For example: the economic value of hunting (primary value: just the meat) in Germany is valued up to €1.4 billion. Furthermore, many jobs are related to hunting such as the processing of meat, tourism, insurances. We hope that in future we will come with more precise figures on the economics of hunting .

Nature is the world largest corporation agency. Nature conservators/conservationists and hunters are very often the same people. Landowners are often conserving nature and hunting. One needs to see that hunting subscribes to conservation and conservation subscribes to sustainable use. That is the pre condition for the collaboration between hunters and conservationists.

In the EU, there are some 7 million hunters, which represent an important group, especially since they are everywhere, even in every Parliament and every village. Therefore, they should be included in the actions for nature conservation as their observations are important and valuable. Monitoring is one of the important issues. An example already exists: in Austria, the hunters upload their observations on a common server. Such information can easily be processed by organization like FACE and the World Organization on Hunting.

3

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Mr. Marghescu concluded that a joint conservation strategy is needed which should be set between hunters and nature conservationists.

- **Geva BLACKETT**, former CEO Scottish Countryside Alliance

Geva Blackett started with the statement that the preservation of land is linked to land management. In Scotland over 60% of the population lives in the “Central Belt”, whereas only few live outside. Hunting estates count 43 % of privately owned land.

She underlined two examples of the role of hunters:

- Management of heather moorland for red grouse Moore

Species like the grouse Moore bring many benefits, but they also need conservation projects.

The management of moorland birds is very important. Many species leave on the same habitat thus working at protecting one species usually helps others.

Millions of taxpayers would need to pay for conservation. Hunters on the opposite can conserve for no money.

- Control of invasive non-native species

Example: the grey squirrel that needs control to avoid the disappearing of the red one. She invited the participants to consider the link between the hunting fraternity and landowners/managers on the one hand – and invasive species on the other. Hunters/owners are – and should be encouraged and promoted publicly – as a VITAL and cost effective part of the SOLUTION to invasive species.

The Invercauld Estate is 44.000 ha large and hosts many rare species. It has therefore many recognized protected areas and a high number of visitors each year.

Ms. Blackett called the floor’s attention to the Wildlife Estate initiative and the potential it has. She said that she would strongly support it. She recalls the words of Commissioner Dimas: “I very much welcome independent initiatives such as ELO’s Wildlife Estates initiative which promote such synergies between conservation and sustainable use and I hope that many wildlife and hunting estates will join the initiative”.





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- **Angus MIDDLETON** [CEO & Director of Conservation, FACE] speaking on behalf of **Conor O’GORMAN** – BASC

Mr. Middleton explained that we will fail to stop the loss of biodiversity by the 2010 deadline that has been set by the EU. We need more recognition from the society as a whole. In Germany, 90% of the rural territories are managed by hunters but not exclusively. They work in strong collaboration with other stakeholders as farmers, landowners, rural communities.

Regarding the economics of hunting, a 2008 study estimated that hunting amounts to over 8 millions of direct benefits and this does not even include the indirect benefits. The indirect benefits are in excess of that. There are a lot of indirect material and immaterial benefits. Hunting is a resource for biodiversity. Therefore, joint strategies are needed; hunters contribute indirectly to the strategies with a lot of voluntary time. An example is the management of invasive species.

It costs millions and should be taken up by the state.

The European hunters therefore need a Europeanized trust and the recognition.

As said before, Europe’s hunters are one of the most important resources for conserving biodiversity not only within the EU but also abroad. Mr. Middleton concluded that we need to work together if we want to make a difference beyond 2010.

### Questions:

No questions were raised.

3. Any other business – *Divers* – Verschiedenes

Roger HELMER asked the MEPs to vote for the Intergroup to be recognized as an Intergroup of the EP.

4. Next meeting – *Prochaine réunion* – Nächste Sitzung

The next meeting will take place in January 2010 dealing with the CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in order to prepare for the CITES conference in Qatar in March 2010. CITES is currently being also discussed in the Environment Committee.





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Presence:

**MEPs :**

Véronique MATHIEU (EPP, FR)

Robert STURDY (ECR, UK)

Luis CAPOULAS SANTOS (S&D, PT)

Bèla GLATTFELDER (EPP, HU)

Julie GIRLING (ECR, UK)

Ioan ENCIU (S&D, RO)

Bogdan MARCINKIEWICZ (EPP, PL)

Zigmantas BALČYTIS (S&D, LT)

Paul RÜBIG (EPP, AT)

Elisabeth KÖSTINGER (S&D, AT)

Anna ROSBACH (EFD, DK)

Roger HELMER (ECR, UK)

Edward SCICLUNA (S&D, MT)

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6

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Mikk PIKKMETS, Ass. MEP SAVISAAR

D. JOBKOHL, EFD

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7

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