****

HUNTERS CALL ON THE EU FOR MORE RECOGNITION

OF THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE

**European Hunters’ Federation FACE, underlined during a conference organized in collaboration with the European Commission, the positive role of hunting in wildlife conservation and habitat restoration and claimed its right to be seen as a fully-fledged environmental organisation.**

**European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potocnik recognized hunters’ important role in wild bird conservation saying that *“For over 35 years, the Birds Directive has helped protect Europe's wild birds. Responsible and sustainable hunting has also played an important role, supported by agreements between hunters and bird conservation organisations, such as the one we are celebrating today between BirdLife and FACE. It's encouraging to see the hunting community adopting such a pro-active approach to bird conservation and giving such high-profile recognition to the EU Nature legislation.”***

Brussels, 23 September 2014 – FACE, the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation in the EU, held a Conference in Brussels today, in collaboration with the European Commission’s DG Environment, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Birds Directive, inaugurated by Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment.

The conference, under the title “A New Vision for the Birds Directive and the Positive Role of Hunting” stressed how hunting and the Birds Directive are not in contradiction. On the contrary, hunting and hunters contribute actively to the conservation of wild birds, habitats and biodiversity. The Directive fully recognizes the legitimacy of hunting as a form of sustainable use, providing significant social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits. In effect European hunters are operating as a fully-fledged environmental organisation contributing to reach the targets set out by EU-policy makers.

Speakers gave examples of projects and initiatives carried out by hunters aiming at the conservation of wild bird species, habitats restoration, and improvement of the scientific knowledge of migratory as well as land birds, often in cooperation with other environmental stakeholders. Presentations highlighted how legislation alone is not enough for wildlife conservation, and cooperation between citizens and institutions must also be pursued. Concrete actions and motivated people at ground level are fundamental for the achievement of the goals set out by the Birds Directive. In 35 years European hunters have demonstrated to be effective partners in achieving these objectives - when and where recognized.

The conference was attended by key officials from the European Commission’s DG Environment, MEPs and representatives from other political and conservation institutions and organisations and featured high-level speakers from the Commission, NGOs, science, national politics and hunting associations.

The conference also marked the 10 years of an agreement signed by BirdLife International and FACE which was characterized by constructive dialogue between the two organisations. FACE stands firm on its commitment taken with BirdLife International, not to support initiatives aimed at amending the text of the Birds Directive, believing that such initiatives would only weaken the current provisions of the Birds Directive, which is not in the interest of either party.

FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim summed up the hunters’ view of the on the workings of the Birds Directive: *“The interpretations of this Directive must be conducted with more flexibility in order to prevent disputes that are unrelated to the conservation status of birds. The top priority for the future is the protection of habitats, and it is crucial to have an extensive network of motivated people on the ground actually achieving conservation objectives.”*

[END]

Find the agenda here:

[www.face.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/agenda\_a\_new\_vision\_for\_the\_birds\_directive.pdf](http://www.face.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/agenda_a_new_vision_for_the_birds_directive.pdf)

**For further information please contact:**

Yasmin Hammerschmidt, yasmin.hammerschmidt@face - +32 2 732 6900

WHAT IS FACE?

Established in 1977, FACE represents the interests of Europe’s **7 million hunters** as an international non-profit-making nongovernmental organisation (NGO).

FACE is made up of its **Members**: **national hunters’ associations** from **36 European countries** including the EU-28. FACE also has 3 Associate Members and has its Secretariat in Brussels.

FACE upholds the principle of sustainable use, has been a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) since 1987, and more recently of Wetlands International. FACE works with its partners on a range of hunting-related issues, from international conservation agreements to local implementations with the aim of sustaining hunting across Europe. [www.face.eu](http://www.face.eu)