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European Hunters join the European Platform to help resolve conflicts over large carnivores

FACE was one of the 8 parties signing the agreement that seeks to resolve conflicts occurring between humans and the increasing populations of wolves, bears, lynx and wolverine in Europe.

**Brussels, 12 June 2014** - After 2 years of preparatory work the Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores, promoted by the European Commission, was signed in Brussels on June 10th, between European key stakeholder organisations in the presence of Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik.

The Agreement covers 4 species of large carnivore: Brown bear *Ursus arctos*, Eurasian lynx *Lynx lynx*, Wolf *Canis lupus* and Wolverine *Gulo gulo*. Twenty-one European Member States host at least one of these species. After a long period of decline, their numbers are growing again. However co-existence with humans is not always easy. In an attempt to cope with the social and economic problems arising from this new expansion, the European Commission presented a plan which encourages dialogue between farmers, environmental organisations, hunters, landowners, and scientists to exchange ideas and solutions on the management of large carnivore populations.

In his speech Mr Potočnik stressed the *"[..] need to treat our natural neighbours with respect – but we also need to heed the concerns of those whose lives are genuinely affected by their close proximity. My warm congratulations to the organisations that have worked together to set up this important platform, which represents a major step forward in efforts to address the issue of peaceful coexistence”.*

FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim stated that the European hunters’ community is concerned by the growing number of problems involving large carnivores in areas which are being recolonized the after decades of absence. Hunters are important rural stakeholders, and in many countries have long been involved in the monitoring, conservation, conflict resolution, and management of wolves. By participating to the Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores, FACE reiterates its commitment for conservation based on the principle of sustainable use.

During the launch of this initiative the European Commission stressed that this agreement belongs to the stakeholders, comparing it to the FACE – BirdLife International Agreement on the Birds Directive signed in 2004, on which the Large Carnivores agreement is modelled.

While the EU Habitats Directive is a suitable legal instrument for the conservation and management of species that are not in a favourable conservation status, a greater understanding is needed at national and local level on how its provisions should be interpreted, particularly for the regulation of large carnivores that show an improvement of their population. Conflicts need to be resolved taking into consideration the needs of local communities, economic aspects as well as traditions.

The other signatories of the agreement are: CIC – The International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation; COPA-COGECA – European Farmers and European Agri-cooperatives; ELO - European Landowners’ Organization; EUROPARC Federation; Joint representative of Finnish and Swedish reindeer herders; IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature, European Union Representative Office; and WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature, European Policy Office.

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**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)