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MEPs adopt written declaration on banning seal products in the EU

The European Parliament has adopted a written declaration on banning seal products in the European Union. The House requests the Commission to immediately draft a regulation to ban the import, export and sale of all harp and hooded seal products. MEPs considers that this regulation should not have an impact on traditional Inuit seal hunting which, however, only accounts for 3% of the current hunt.

The written declaration achieved more than half the signatures of all MEPs with some 373 signing so far. The written declaration was originally put forward by **Carl SCHLYTER (Green/EFA, SE), Paulo CASACA (PES, PT), Karl-Heinz FLORENZ (EPP-ED, DE), Mojca DRČAR MURKO(ALDE,SI) and Caroline LUCAS(Greens/EFA,UK).**

MEPs say that more than one and a half million harp seal pups have been slaughtered in the North West Atlantic over the last four years and the vast majority of these animals were less than three months old. The last time the annual number of seals now being killed were slaughtered in the 1950s and 1960s the seal population was reduced by two thirds,

The declaration points out that, on average, sealers receive less than 5% of their income from sealing which provides only a few days' work each year, a team of international veterinarians concluded that 42% of the slaughtered seals they examined may have been skinned whilst still conscious.

The written declaration also says that the import of whitecoat harp seal and blueback hooded seal furs and furskin products was banned within the EEC in 1983 (83/129/EEC), whereas sealers now wait a few days until harp seal pups have moulted and whereas the products of these animals are still imported into the European Union.

MEPs point out that a number of EU countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy) have already taken steps to ban the trade in seal products, and others (the UK and the Netherlands) are considering action, and the USA, Mexico and Croatia have banned the trade in seal products. Finally, the declaration says that the Council of Europe is currently considering a motion that calls for a ban on the import and use of seals and seal parts.