



Presentation to European Commission  
Petitions Committee, Brussels, Belgium  
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Dr J. Bryan Carroll, Chair  
EAZA Bushmeat Working Group

Chairman, members of the Petitions Committee, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to present the case on behalf of the 1.9 million signatories to the petition organised by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) in partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), which was presented officially to the Parliament in January 2001.

Before I address our concerns I would like to note that it has been a long journey to today's meeting and it is a truly historic moment for all of EAZA's 265 member zoos and Aquaria. We welcome the opportunity to be able to report back to our supporters some positive action by the Parliament by the end of this hearing.

The zoo community has not traditionally engaged in campaigning activity of this kind and I can assure you that even three years ago we would not have envisaged sitting before such a grand gathering as today's meeting, presenting the case for an issue that unites conservation and development concerns. It is our first attempt at raising an issue in the European Parliament and we do so with hope and expectation that your Committee will be able to address the concerns of the signatories.

We were extremely heartened to find that our visitors were concerned about the issue of bushmeat, and pleased that the petition attracted so much support over the 12 month period that we ran it. It is clear that European voters feel extremely strongly about the overexploitation of wildlife and the threat to the existence of animals such as gorillas and chimpanzees.

We are also glad to see that the Parliament, through this Committee, recognises the issue to be of sufficient importance to arrange today's hearing.

Before I outline what the 1.9 million supporters of the campaign have asked for I would like to take a few moments to briefly restate the problem that is the focus of our concern.

The term Bushmeat, refers to wild animals caught for meat from the bush or forest. Bushmeat can be anything from highly endangered species such as gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants through to other species such as cane rats, porcupines and snails.

I would like to state that EAZA and IFAW are fundamentally concerned with the unsustainable nature of the currently unregulated bushmeat trade. We believe that the issue of bushmeat unites two vital issues of sustainable development in Central and West Africa and the survival of endangered species such as the great apes.

Bushmeat is a vital source of protein for many poor rural communities in the region and due to the rapid commercialisation of the bushmeat trade it has led to the food security and livelihoods of these communities being put at risk.

There is considerable scientific evidence that the bushmeat trade is rapidly spiralling out of control. For example, in the Congo Basin it is estimated that 5 million tonnes of bushmeat (off the bone) per annum are traded (Wilkie and Carpenter, 1998; Fa and Peres, 2001). If this level of wildlife off-take continues, rural communities in Congo basin countries could no longer rely on it as a viable source of protein. In a report by the Food & Agriculture Organisation (2000) it was stated that 50% of the people living in this area were classed as food insecure. Bushmeat has always played a staple part in these peoples' diet and the impending loss of wildlife will further jeopardise their existences.

Hunting these valuable food resources to extinction means that they will be gone forever. The rural poor will never again be able to use bushmeat as the cheap and reliable food that it once was, nor as a valuable source of income. We are extremely concerned that, whilst bushmeat is an ever-pressing issue amongst conservation organisations, it has not been given the attention that it deserves by development agencies.

The trade represents a very large economic activity as indicated by a recent UK Department for International Development study published just before Christmas. The report states that bushmeat potentially could actually contribute to the alleviation of poverty to meet OECD targets of reducing poverty by 50% by 2015 and I quote from the author Joanna Elliott:

*'The case studies confirm and add more to the body of anecdotal evidence of the positive livelihoods and food security impact of wildlife, particularly through tourism and bushmeat, on poor people's lives.'* She estimates that that *'...of the 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1 a day, 264 million live in those arid and semi-arid areas where anecdotal evidence suggests wildlife-poverty linkages are the highest, and that bushmeat is worth in the order of £1 billion per annum to those living on less than \$1 a day in sub-Saharan Africa.'*

I will quickly outline the reasons for the bushmeat crisis. These include:

- Population increase - Hunting in forests provides, on a sustainable basis, for the protein needs of communities when the population density is around 2-3 persons per km<sup>2</sup> (Bushmeat Crisis Task Force 2001). At present, population densities throughout the developing world are much higher, - resulting in increased demand for bushmeat
- Increasing urbanisation resulting in the transfer of demand for bushmeat to urban markets
- Lack of alternative sources of protein
- Improving infrastructure resulting in improved communication (particularly by road and train) among previously remote communities and forest areas
- Weak law enforcement resulting in a large illegal sector to the trade in wild meat, particularly relating to poaching in protected areas, killing of protected species, and hunting during closed seasons.
- Finally, Extractive industry working within forests, particularly the timber industry. The timber industry has a large labour force, which needs feeding, and hunting is the cheapest way of providing protein. Furthermore, the constant haulage traffic taking logs from the forest, through the major urban centres, to the ports allows a means of transporting commercial hunters into previously remote forests, and their catch out to the markets. The logging industry, which includes many European-based companies, is, we believe, complicit in illegal hunting on concessions both for consumption by the workforce, and for supply to major markets.

The consequence of this massive increase in hunting activity is that wildlife is being overhunted on an enormous scale, and as a result has been called the **Bushmeat Crisis**. The current estimate is that up to 5 million tonnes of bushmeat is harvested per annum from the Congo basin alone. If you compare this to the volume of trade in the Amazon basin which is 0.2 million tonnes you will see the urgency. It is also important to note that the trade is largely unreported in economic studies, but it has a multi-million dollar value in the regional economy.

**If this crisis is not addressed the situation will continue to spiral out of control with disastrous consequences.**

If we wish to overcome this crisis, to protect biodiversity in line with obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity to enhance food security for the poor, and to protect livelihoods for poor communities, what must happen is clear. The bushmeat trade must be controlled; controlled to eliminate illegal hunting and controlled to reduce overhunting. Over the long term alternative sources of protein must be developed, as the forests simply cannot sustain the protein needs of the current population let alone future population growth. The problem can only be addressed through collaboration between Governments, between Governments and NGOs working in the areas of both biodiversity and development, and with the people who themselves rely on wild meat either for food or for livelihoods.

### **The role of the European Union**

Over the two and a half years since we started to collect signatures there are encouraging signs that African nations are recognising the seriousness of this problem. This is evidenced by the leading role they have taken in the CITES Bushmeat Working Group and many countries have agreed to participate in UNEP's Great Ape Survival Project. Our petition calls upon the EU to encourage and support African leaders to address the problem of the bushmeat trade. The EU is highly influential in Africa due to historical links and, through the Commission and the activities of member states, is a major provider of aid to the continent.

What action has the Commission taken to help stop the bushmeat trade? The Commission claims to be the most important donor for the protection of great apes in Africa, to support the development of certification schemes for forest management, and that the Central Africa Regional Programme, under the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF envisages continued support to tropical forest conservation including efforts to eradicate poaching. Action is undertaken through the ECOFAC programme, the ABAC programme, through MIKE (specifically dealing with elephants), and projects have been supported through the forest and environment budget line. Is this effective? Is this enough? The answer to both questions must be no, for the simple reason that the bushmeat trade continues unabated, with no effective control in any country in which the EU is active. More specifically, of two billion Euros allocated through the EDF for aid to sub-Saharan Africa, less than 0.5% was allocated to conservation work of any kind. The Commission claims to be the most important donor for the protection of great apes, yet there is no specific budget line comparable to the US Great Ape Fund, which resulted from the Great Ape Conservation Act.

What is wrong with EU funding for forests and environments in general? A recent report by FERN (November 2002) indicates that funding for forest programmes has reduced since 1994, and tend to focus on roads and infrastructure rather than forests and environment. Part of the 2001 appropriation of funds from the forests and environment budget line was not committed, apparently as a result of poor

communication with the Commission. EC Regulation 2494/2000 provides 249 million Euros in support of conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests in developing countries. There has been little action to make these funds available, and no sign of strategic guidelines and priorities for action under this regulation.

The large-scale support for road building in Central Africa will undoubtedly facilitate the commercial bushmeat trade over long distances and will exacerbate the unsustainable and illegal sector of the trade. Environmental impact assessments do not currently take account of the role of new roads in transporting illegal timber and illegal bushmeat. The EDF regulations should be amended to take account of these broader ex-sitio impacts of projects and ensure that that mitigation against these impacts is included within the project. This approach is taken by others, for instance IMF support for the rebuilding and expansion of the rail network in Cameroon includes clear law enforcement obligations to prevent the improved rail network facilitating the transport of illegal bushmeat.

### **The future role of the European Union in addressing the Bushmeat Crisis**

Looking to the future it is encouraging that the Commission recognises the problem of the illegal bushmeat trade and the unsustainable nature of the legal sector of the trade. It is encouraging that the EU pressed for specific action points to address the bushmeat trade at the WSSD in Johannesburg. The Commission has stated a commitment to initiatives such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which held its first meeting yesterday, and it has stated its desire to mainstream bushmeat issues within development co-operation sectors. We believe, however, that this does not go far enough as a statement of intent to help address the bushmeat crisis. We believe that the European Union should adopt a clearly stated position on the issue of illegal bushmeat hunting. **The coalition of EAZA/IFAW, representing 1.9 million European citizens that have signed up against the large-scale slaughter of wild animals for bushmeat in West and Central Africa, is, therefore, requesting that the European Commission develop an official Statement on the bushmeat issue as a frame of reference for further action-oriented policies.**

We believe that the adoption of an official Position Statement can only be of benefit, both within the EU and in the countries affected by this crisis. It sends a clear signal that the EU has the intention of helping African nations control the illegal bushmeat trade and bring it onto a sustainable footing. The 10 action points on control of the trade that were submitted to the Commission and the Parliament are as relevant today as they were two years ago when we drew them up. We believe that a Position Statement will provide the framework within which these points can be addressed, and for which specific funds can be allocated.

Thank You

Dr J. Bryan Carroll, Chair  
EAZA Bushmeat Working Group