

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WTO Decision Confirms EU Ban is Arbitrary and Unjustifiably Discriminatory

Anticipate EU compliance, changes to regulations or a return to negotiating table

Ottawa, May 22, 2014 – Canada’s sealing community is encouraged with the decision announced by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Appellate Body that found the European Union’s (EU) current ban on seal products is inconsistent with its international obligations.

The Appellate Body, citing the chapeau of Article XX, struck down the EU Seal Regime. It found the regime was designed and applied in an arbitrary or unjustifiably discriminatory manner between countries where the same conditions prevail.

“Today’s ruling by the WTO Appellate Body has thankfully confirmed that the EU ban is discriminatory and unfair,” said Dion Dakins, Chair of the Seals and Sealing Network (SSN). “We will be interested to see how the EU will bring itself into compliance with the ruling.”

In its ruling today, the WTO Appellate Body was strongly critical of the WTO Dispute Settlement Panel in many aspects of its November 2013 decision including whether there were less trade-restrictive alternative measures available to achieve the EU’s objective. The WTO Appellate Body found the EU seal ban more restrictive than necessary to fulfill its stated objectives.

“The ruling sends a clear message to the EU to sit down and negotiate with Canada and Norway on a more reasonable approach,” added Dakins. “Even the European public is opposed to trade bans based on moral grounds and they understand the dangerous precedent such bans set for fair and open trade.”

A recent opinion poll commissioned by the [Trade Fairness Coalition](#) highlights how Europeans feel about the seal hunt and “public morality” trade bans. The poll, conducted by Abacus Data, found that a majority of Europeans (50 per cent) opposed trade bans based on moral grounds and even a greater majority (57 per cent) saw that such bans could lead to trade restriction for other sectors of the economy. In addition 63 per cent of European felt that seal hunting was acceptable in some form, while only 33 percent opposed seal hunting in any form.

While Canada is home to world’s largest seal populations, sealing occurs in many coastal countries including member states of the European Union. “Seals are important resource to maintain northern and coastal economies and traditions,” said Aaju Peter, an Inuit lawyer and member of the Seals & Sealing Network. “Bans with exemptions for race or origin are outdated approaches.”

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For more information or to schedule an interview with a member of the SSN, please contact:

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*The **Seals and Sealing Network** is a national non-profit organization promoting sustainable and wise use principles. The Seals and Sealing Network is committed to the conservation and respectful harvesting of the world's seal species through sound scientific management and internationally accepted sustainable use practices. It comprises government, Inuit, veterinarians, conservationists, health care practitioners and Industry representatives. For more information, please go to www.sealsandsealing.net.*