



The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, P.C.
Senator

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals We all Care about Animal Welfare

www.sealsonline.org

OTTAWA, April 23, 2009 – At a crucial moment when the European Parliament could vote to ban all seal products to appease animal rights groups, **Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette** has emerged as the ambassador of Canadian seal-hunting communities by releasing the draft declaration to the press, with the Liberal fisheries and oceans critic, the Honourable **Gerry Byrne**, PC, MP.

The Declaration aims to establish common ethical principles for all seal-hunting countries by promoting a three-way balance between ensuring animal welfare, ensuring the well-being of human communities and protecting species and ecosystems.

The **Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals** will play a major role in protecting seals. In fact, it is based as much on the most recent scientific knowledge and on the positions of key agreements and organizations that promote biodiversity and the environment (such as the WWF) as on the Aboriginal peoples' traditional understanding of the natural world.

Written by a team of seven experts and scientists from six Canadian provinces and territories and the United States, the Universal Declaration will be a starting point for new discussions between North Americans and Europeans on the topic of marine mammal welfare, including the seal.

"We are asking Europe to help us establish universal ethical practices," said **the Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette**. *"Since Europe defends animal welfare, and rightly so, there is no reason for it not to support this Declaration. We all care about animal welfare!"*

"This declaration defines who we are as sealers and sealing communities and it is the truth," said **the Honourable Gerry Byrne, PC**, Member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte (Newfoundland and Labrador). *"For three years now, people who share no real stake in the well-being of our environment, our culture or the future of the ecosystem have attempted to define us falsely for the purposes of fundraising and their own profile. People like forgotten celebrities and activists. But if they care about seals, they will now endorse this document and its principles. In so doing, they will also have to acknowledge that it is not only the way things should happen, it is the way things are happening."*

The **Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals** will now be sent to the various countries (including Canada) that participate in the seal hunt, including Denmark (Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden, to seek their commitment to this code of ethics. An awareness campaign about the Declaration will also be launched to gain the support of leading figures; experts and scientists; hunting, fishing and trapping federations; non-governmental organizations interested in the seal hunt; environmental groups; animal protection groups; and, of course, governments.

Once this has been done, a delegation will officially present the Universal Declaration to the European Parliament in Brussels and to the United Nations in New York.

The website of the Declaration (www.sealsonline.org) was also unveiled and will serve as a rallying point for seal hunting communities. The site will report changes to the Declaration as discussions proceed. An online petition is already available to be signed.

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