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Bern and Montreux, 10. November 2020

Subject: Denmark to cull 15 million mink – Ending the fur industry

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you, in the name of Fondation Franz Weber, a Swiss-based international environmental organisation of which I am the President, on an issue of grave concern that has recently been highlighted by the global press.

We have learned that Danish authorities have decided, on November 4th 2020, to euthanise all the minks on its 1,200 farms as a precautionary measure, due to likely coronavirus outbreaks and spill-over to humans. More than 15 million animals will be culled pursuant of this decision.

Although we understand that human health is your priority, this tragedy has exposed the cruel and inhumane practice of an industry where minks are unnaturally confined in large numbers causing the spread of disease to be rapidly transmitted between animals, and to humans. However, the real tragedy lies with the fact that millions of lives are to be extinguished simply because of human error. The high price that these animals are now forced to pay could have easily been avoided if the mink fur industry, which simply panders to human vanity, had been shut down decades ago.

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We therefore urge you to instead look at non-lethal alternatives to the mass-culling of minks. Euthanising can only be the very last resort and, if done, must be conducted at the very least in the most humane and painless way possible.

This being said, we appeal to the Danish government, under your leadership, to seize this tragic opportunity to **put an end to this type of farming and to all future production of mink pelts in Denmark.**

Farming wild animals – or any form of intensive farming – poses a direct threat to human health. According to the latest report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on Biodiversity and Pandemics¹, issued on October 29th 2020, *“the farming, trade and consumption of wildlife and wildlife-derived products (for food, medicine, fur and other products) have led to biodiversity loss, and emerging diseases, including SARS and COVID-19”*. IPBES experts further stated that *“more than 70% of all emerging diseases affecting people have originated in wildlife and domesticated animals”*².

Apart from the clear health threat that the fur industry represents, it is also highly questionable from an ethical point of view. The methods of production of mink fur – for superfluous demand for the fashion industry – imply cruelty and a total disregard of the well-being of these usually solitary wild animals. This can no longer be justified in the 21st century.

For all these reasons, we ask that you and your government take immediate and definitive measures to put an end to this industry and trade. Denmark has made significant progress over the past years regarding animal welfare – notably with the banning of bestiality and of ritual slaughter without stunning. In line with this, such empathy ought to be extended to the plight of the minks, and that this shameful industry is terminated on a permanent basis.

I remain personally at your disposal should you need more information on the links between commercial trade in and farming of wild animals and the current pandemic.

Yours faithfully,

FONDATION FRANZ WEBER

Vera Weber, President

¹https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-11/20201028%20IPBES%20Pandemics%20Workshop%20Report%20Plain%20Text%20Final_o.pdf

²<https://ipbes.net/covid19stimulus>