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NOTE

from: Cyprus delegation
to: Council

Subject: Conclusions of the “International Conference on the Movement of Exotic Animals”, organised by FVE and the Cyprus Presidency, on 4/5 October 2012
- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached a note from the Cyprus delegation on the abovementioned subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 18-20 December 2012.

Conclusions of the “International Conference on the Movement of Exotic Animals”, organised by FVE and the Cyprus Presidency, on 4/5 October 2012 in Brussels

On 4/5 October 2012, the Cyprus Presidency, in cooperation with the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe, the Swiss Confederation and the European Commission, organised a conference on the import and keeping of exotic animals in Europe.

The conference dealt with the issue of movements of non-indigenous/exotic animals to Europe, the existing concerns and risks and future challenges to face.

It was attended by representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission (DG SANCO and DG Environment), officials from competent authorities from EU Member States and third countries, representatives of non-governmental organizations, scientists dealing with the issue from both the veterinary and the environmental perspective, as well as stakeholder representatives of the animal trade sector.

From the discussions at the conference, the Presidency representatives drew the following conclusions:

- The need was stated for harmonised terms and definitions used in the area of movements of exotic animals kept either for scientific reasons or as pets. Examples quoted were the following: domesticated animals, wild animals bred in specific farms, wild animals born in the wild or in captivity, as well as specific categories of animals which could complete the CITES list and help establish the species-specific ownership requirements and responsibilities.

- The benefits of harmonising rules regarding the ownership and import of this type of animals, in combination with adequate enforcement, were acknowledged. Enforcement could include on-site inspections, for example at the points of entry into the Union or at the establishments in which the animals are kept. Any concrete steps to establish and implement such requirements and controls would have to encompass the various groups of stakeholders, such as the animal breeders, animal traders, animal keepers, animal protection organisations, competent authorities, custom services and CITES.
- The use of a Europe-wide label could be considered in order to encourage the application of good practices throughout the animal movement chain, i.e. from the place of origin or capture up to the pet shops, farms, zoos and private owners. This could be combined with the harmonisation of measures to secure traceability of the exotic animals.
- The need for information of the public was confirmed, e.g. through awareness campaigns focusing on the animal health and environmental aspects, in particular for citizens planning to import from their holiday destination non-indigenous animal species as pets.
- The expediency of a mandatory certificate of ownership was discussed. In order to be most effective, such proof of ownership could be linked to official examination by an authorized veterinarian in the case of certain exotic animal species. This could, where appropriate, be accompanied by certification whether the interested person meets the specific requirements for keeping the exotic animal in question.
- The usefulness of prevention programs and actions to fight the illegal trafficking of exotic animal species in the countries of origin was underlined. Information and local economy are the two key pillars on which possible actions should focus. Any relevant action taken should be designed in order not to hamper in any way the movement of this type of animals when all relevant requirements are fulfilled and the movements are done in compliance with the legislation in force. This could be in particular safeguarded through the reinforcement of the national competent authorities' collaboration.

- The possibility of conducting relevant studies before granting permission for the entry of a new animal species into an importing country was discussed as a means to ensure timely identification of any potential risks for the regional ecosystem. Combined with this, the expediency of making transportation procedures for certain species conditional on an import authorisation was examined.
- Education and training were identified as the backbone of all preventive actions, addressing not only stakeholders but also the general public. Owners should be aware of their obligations and responsibilities when they plan to keep exotic animals as pets.
- The need was confirmed for custom officers to be adequately trained to identify and detect the illegal trafficking of these species, as well as to handle them properly without risking neither their own lives nor those of the animals concerned.
- It was stressed, as an over-arching principle, that any of the measures discussed would have to be fully in line with internal market rules and the obligations of the EU and its Member States in international trade, thus not hampering the legal trade of exotic animals which is in compliance with mandatory requirements.
