Protection and preservation of big monkeys, illegal trade in bushmeat. Petition 461/2000

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Proinsias de ROSSA (PES, IRL) on the protection and conservation of great apes and other species endangered by the illegal trade in bushmeat. The report followed a petition addressed to Parliament which was backed up by 1 900 000 signatures and was part of a campaign by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) in association with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The petition drew attention to the trade in bushmeat which is carried on mainly in Africa but is also on the increase in Asia and Latin America, affecting more and more animal species on a vast scale: 23,500 tonnes a year in Sarawak, 64,000 to 67,000 tonnes in Amazonia and 1 million to 5 million tonnes in the Congo basin. This trade is leading to a worrying depletion of wildlife in forests. The problem is caused by a number of factors: population growth, poverty, weak governance, an increase in illegal hunting and the emergence of distribution networks for bushmeat reaching into the EU. The committee's report stressed the need for an EU strategic action plan in this area, as part of a policy to support bio-diversity. According to MEPs, the EU should seek to involve all concerned, starting with local populations but also including governments and the private sector. There should be particular emphasis on strengthening the capabilities of wildlife and nature conservation bodies, including restrictions on high-powered rifles and the ammunition for such weapons. Forestry management should also enable endangered species to survive as part of action plans such as the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Proposal (FLEGT) and take account of agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and recommendations made by the NGO Forests and the European Union Resource Network (FERN). The committee said that 10% of funding available under the European Development Fund (EDF) and the regulation on financial aid for Latin America and Asia (ALA) should be set aside for these matters. The ECOFAC programme (Conservation and Rational Utilisation of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa) and the ABAC programme (Alternatives to Poaching in Central Africa) should be given additional funding. Lastly, legal deterrents and penalties should be envisaged to put an end to this illegal trade for reasons of public health, public safety and protection of endangered species.