Humane trapping standards: Agreement between EC and the United States on international standards of trapping

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OBJECTIVE: to conclude an International Agreement between the European Community and the USA on the observance of humane trapping standards. COMMUNITY MEASURE: Council Decision 98/487/EC concerning the conclusion of an International Agreement in the form of an Agreed Minute between the European Community and the United States of America on humane trapping standards. CONTENTS: The main objectives of the agreement are to: - lay down harmonized technical rules governing the production and use of traps which allow adequate protection of the welfare of trapped animals; - facilitate trade between the parties in traps, pelts and products manufactured from species covered by the agreement. The agreement, concluded in the form of an agreed minute between the European Community and the USA, in particular lays down a timetable for testing the compliance of traps with the standards laid down with a view to certifying them and replacing non-certified traps. It also lays down a common framework with a view to the use of less cruel traps and trapping methods, which the respective competent authorities are responsible for applying (in the case of the United States, both national and tribal authorities). This framework is comparable on all points to the agreement already signed with Canada and Russia, to which this agreed minute refers throughout. More specifically, the agreement provides for: 1) thresholds and indicators by means of which to measure the degree of "welfare" of animals to be captured or killed, 2) adoption of a timetable for compliance by traps with the standards laid down in the agreement: . 3 to 5 years after the entry into force of the agreement for restraining traps, . 5 years for killing traps, 3) a ban on all traps not certified as complying within 3 years of the deadlines laid down in the timetable for compliance (however, derogations are provided for whereby certain traps which do not comply may temporarily be used, particularly with the aim of taking account of certain cultural or environmental aspects). Finally, in a letter annexed to the agreement, the United States states that the use of all leghold traps to catch ermine or muskrats will be banned 4 years after the entry into force of the agreement between the EC, Canada and Russia on humane trapping (these two species account for about 50% of all animals trapped in the United States each year). For all other species, the use of conventional metal leghold traps will be banned 6 years after the entry into force of that agreement. ENTRY INTO FORCE: the agreement will enter into force once all the necessary notifications have been made.