

**Ján Budaj**

*Minister of Environment  
of the Slovak Republic*

Bratislava, 31 January 2023  
Ref. number: 6309/2023

Dear Mr Commissioner,

Recently, the topic of the conservation of the grey wolf population has been resonating in several European forums and institutions. In this context, the Ministers responsible for the protection of the environment and biodiversity of Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Spain, Ireland, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia express their unequivocal position on this sensitive and biodiversity-relevant issue. On 24 November 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the protection of livestock farming and large carnivores in Europe, which attracted the attention of the European Union institutions, its Member States and the public.

The resolution summarises in detail the issue of large carnivore abundance and trends within the European Union and highlights that it is European legislation and international conventions and organisations that have contributed to increasing the abundance of these species and improving their status in several parts of Europe. The resolution also identifies conflicts of interest between nature conservation and livestock farming, which occur mainly where the range of large carnivores is expanding and where preventive measures are lacking. The resolution underlines the important role of the European Union and its Member States in creating financial instruments to improve coexistence between large carnivores and humans. Although many of the above facts are important and must continue to be discussed, we, the Ministers of the Environment, at a time of global biodiversity crisis, unequivocally reject the resolution's tendency to weaken the legal protection of the wolf.

This was the position expressed jointly by the European Union and its Member States at the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, known as the Bern Convention. The meeting took place from 27 November to 2 December 2022 at the Council of Europe's headquarters in Strasbourg and heard a number of expert arguments for maintaining the listing of the grey wolf in Appendix II (strictly protected fauna species). The Swiss Confederation's re-proposal to downlist the grey wolf to Appendix III of the Bern Convention (protected fauna species) was not approved as it did not receive the necessary two-thirds support in the vote.

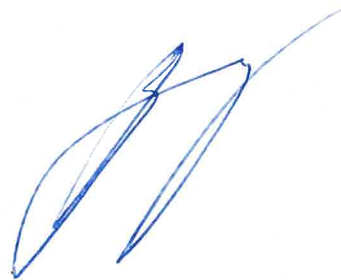
Fortunately, the European Union still has a wealth of natural resources in many places, including the grey wolf. Together with the Eurasian lynx and other carnivores, they play an indispensable role in regulating the abundance of game and improving its health. In coexistence with large carnivores, damage to livestock is unavoidable, but several countries have already taken measures to eliminate them in the past. These include compensation for damage caused

by these species to livestock and property, as well as preventive measures laid down in generally binding legislation. We are convinced that it is strict protection, together with an effective system of preventive measures, fair compensation, but also communication with the experts, the stakeholders concerned, as well as the general public, that will bring us the best solutions.

We believe that the European Commission will continue to take the same responsible approach to the protection of rare species as it has done up to now, while at the same time promoting the implementation of instruments and policies that will make it possible to not only compensate, fairly and without unnecessary administrative burdens, for the potential damage caused, in particular, to livestock, but also those that will contribute to their strengthening and growth. Traditional land management, grazing of cattle, sheep or goats, plays an important role in preserving and maintaining many unique sites in terms of biodiversity, supports rural life and also contributes to food security through sustainable farming.

In this regard, Environment Ministers will assist the European Commission in gathering information and further strengthening of support and the development of measures.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

On behalf of:

Ms Rositsa KARAMFILOVA-BLAGOVA  
Minister of Environment and Water  
Bulgaria

Ms Steffi LEMKE  
Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer  
Protection  
Germany

Mr Georgios AMYRAS  
Deputy Minister of Environment and Energy in charge of Environmental Protection  
Greece

Ms Teresa RIBERA RODRÍGUEZ  
Vice-President of the Government and Minister for Ecological Transition and the Demographic  
Challenge  
Spain

Mr. Malcolm NOONAN  
Minister of State with responsibility for Heritage and Electoral Reform  
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Mr Costas KADIS  
Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment  
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Ms Joëlle WELFRING  
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Ms Leonore GEWESSLER  
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Mr Duarte CORDEIRO  
Minister of the Environment and Climate Action  
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Mr.  
Virginijus Sinkevičius  
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