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7 000 000 Hunters for Conservation in Europe

Joint Statement of BirdLife International and FACE on Cormorants

June 2008

BirdLife International and FACE are aware of the ongoing discussions on the potential impact of Cormorants on fisheries and aquaculture, as well as on fish fauna in general, and reiterate their commitment to address this issue in dialogue with concerned stakeholders and authorities, within the framework of the EU Birds Directive.

In this context the two organisations share a common view on the following points:

- 1) **We oppose any proposal of listing the Cormorant as huntable species in Annex II of the Birds Directive.** A motivation for this proposal may be a misconception that species listed in Annex II are not protected, when in fact all wild bird species are protected under the Directive. Notwithstanding this, the Cormorant is not a game species for hunters, and it is not the main purpose of Annex II to address potential or perceived damage caused by bird species. In addition, for any considered control measures during the reproductive season, derogations would still be required under Art. 9§1.
- 2) **We stress that it is the right of each EU Member State to decide on the application of derogations under Art.9,** and that there is no legal possibility under the Birds Directive for a binding EU wide framework obliging Member States to reduce Cormorant populations. In cases where effective alternative, non lethal, solutions are absent, Member States have the right to use derogations under the Birds Directive to prevent serious damage to fisheries, provided all relevant conditions of Art.9 are fulfilled.
- 3) **We suggest focusing efforts on the follow-up and promotion of the work undertaken by the REDCAFE and INTERCAFE projects.** We see it as especially important to make available, test and use the tools and best practice compiled by these projects in all relevant Member States, in the appropriate languages.
- 4) **We consider that it should also be a priority for Member States and the European Commission to undertake detailed and comprehensive monitoring of application of Art.9 derogations** related to the culling of Cormorants and to assess the impact these measures have on populations of Cormorants, on wider biodiversity, on fish-stocks and on the socio-economic situation in the fisheries sector. This is to assess the effectiveness of these derogation measures and to ensure that their application does not affect the conservation status of the species. The results of such monitoring should be made available to all stakeholders.
We also note that there are still knowledge gaps about the extent to which Cormorants contribute to certain economic and ecological problems in the fisheries sector.

- 5) **We suggest the development of a guidance document by the European Commission on Cormorants.** This document should build on the experience from projects like INTERCAFE and give guidance on ways to address the Cormorant issue, including how Art.9 §1of the Birds Directive can be applied by Member States.

In the light of the legal situation (points 1 & 2) and in the context of the already ongoing and proposed activities regarding Cormorant (points 3-5) both organisations remain unconvinced as to the added benefit of a non-binding “Pan-European Management Plan” for Cormorants. This is partly due to the lack of sufficient information on its content and proposed implementation. FACE and BirdLife oppose any calls for such a plan if the main focus and purpose of it was to reduce Cormorant populations in Europe.

BirdLife International and FACE request all stakeholders, Member States and EU Institutions to take the above mentioned elements into consideration whilst addressing the “Cormorant issue” in Europe.

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