

## *Ornis Committee Meeting*

Venue: Casa Leoni, Triq il-Kbira San Guzepp, Sta.Venera

Held on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2013

### **Members Present:**

<b>Chairperson:</b>	Dr Louis F. Cassar
<b>Secretary:</b>	Mr Victor Agius
<b>Environmental Directorate:</b>	Dr Petra Caruana Dingli

### **Government Nominated Representatives:**

Ms Emeline Fenech  
Mr Gwido Baldacchino  
Mr Marco Falzon

### **Birdlife Representation:**

Mr Joseph Mangion  
Mr Nicholas Barbara

### **FKNK Representation:**

Mr Joe Buttigieg  
Mr Anthony Mifsud

### **Appointed Experts:**

Mr Mark Gauci  
Mr Frank Vassallo

### ***AGENDA:***

- 1. Introduction of Committee Members*
- 2. Application of EU derogation for Spring Hunting*

#### **001. Introduction of Committee Members**

1.1 The meeting was opened by Mr. Victor Agius, Secretary of the Committee who invited each member to introduce themselves and the organisation or entity they represent.

1.2 Dr. Louis F. Cassar, Chairperson Ornis Committee, stated that the main issues of this first meeting were precisely related to: establish the dates for the Spring Hunting Season; confirm autumn hunting statics for 2012; ensure monitoring and enforcement throughout the season with a view to ascertain conservation of the environment.

1.3 Dr Petra Caruana Dingli, representing the Environment Directorate, outlined that MEPA was the authority responsible for policies related to wildlife conservation, including birds; moreover, such policies fall within the framework of existing laws and legislations.

1.4 Ms. Emeline Fenech, newcomer on the Ornithology Committee, introduced herself as a psychology graduate, presently employed with HSBC.

1.5 Mr. Gwido Baldacchino, also a new face on the Ornithology Committee, stated that he was a full time farmer by profession and that he was very familiar with issues pertaining to agriculture and the rural environment *per se*.

1.6 Another new member on this committee is Mr. Marco Falzon, who presently occupies a position of general manager related to viticulture activities within the private sector.

1.7 Birdlife (Malta) representative, Mr. Joseph Mangion, stressed that Birdlife (Malta) has no intention of abolishing hunting, but he also emphasised that enforcement and more control by local authorities should be scrupulously followed. Mr. Nicholas Barbara, Birdlife (Malta) Conservation Manager, stated that Birdlife was against spring hunting on a point of principle. Furthermore, Birdlife (Malta) stressed on the importance of submitting items, critical to Ornithology, for discussion so as to maintain the momentum.

1.8 Mr. Joe Buttigieg and Mr. Anthony Mifsud, both representing Federazzjoni Kaccaturi u Nassaba Konservazzjonisti (FKNK), on behalf of Mr Lino Farrugia and Mr Joe Perici Calascione, stated that they are in favour of enforcement to the extent of a zero-tolerance policy, to secure future hunting practise in Malta. In this respect, FKNK also suggested that a meeting with ALE Police Section should take place so as to make clear this unanimous against. They also insisted on the fact that local hunters should benefit from the same rights as other hunters from other EU countries.

1.9 Mr Mark Gauci - Avifauna expert, who has both knowledge and experience on bird ringing, shall be assisting the Chairperson on matters pertaining to avifauna.

1.10 Mr. Frank Vassallo hunting and trapping specialist with vast experience on related issues, confirmed his readiness to contribute through technical advice.

1.11 Dr Louis F. Cassar pointed out that times have changed and that tensions between environmentalists and hunters need to take a different and more mature dimension. Dr Cassar also referred to pressures emanating from the general public on both sides.

## **002. Spring Hunting Derogation**

2.1 Secretary briefed the committee about the Hunting Derogation with regards to: autumn data; and, national and daily quotas and conditions regarding spring hunting derogation.

2.2 A major unanimous concern was the monitoring and enforcement of regulations. Dr Petra Caruana Dingli confirmed that those concerned should strictly abide to stipulated regulations. She stressed that framework regulations should be adhered to.

2.3 According to Birdlife (Malta), the EU Commission was still scrutinizing the situation in Malta regarding illegalities, during the period of derogation of 2012. At this stage it was felt that it was important to establish the figures for autumn as it is upon such data that the national quota for spring is based. If the amount of 21,000 birds caught, and registered by means of SMSs sent by hunters, than the Spring Hunting derogation should not apply.

2.4 Dr Petra Caruana Dingli informed the committee according to the latest statistics pertaining to autumn hunting season this year, Malta can apply for the spring hunting derogation. She confirmed that there are 10,654 licensed hunters in Malta. According to official statistics, 9501 turtle doves were caught during the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013. She also mentioned that 1153 hunters have not yet submitted their data, whilst 7,703 hunters declared that their catch was nil for both species, that is, Turtle Dove and Quail. Dr. Petra Caruana Dingli mentioned various studies, which were made during 2010, 2011 and 2012, all of which utilized a common methodology. With respect to the current year (2013), MEPA was awaiting official direction. The proposed 2013 study, which will follow the same scientific approach of previous years, will research the turtle dove and quail species during the spring hunting season.

2.5 Birdlife (Malta) representatives expressed scepticism with respect to the amounts quoted. Birdlife (Malta) representatives registered reservation on the methodology of study and also regarding the fact that these take place during spring hunting season and not autumn.

2.6 A vote was taken and the result was; five members voted in favour, Environmental Directorate abstained (qualifying that they do not vote on such issues), while BirdLife Malta voted against.

2.7 In the winding up of meeting the Dr Lou Cassar, suggested that for forthcoming meetings; ALE Head and Dr. Joe Borg - Head of Department of Biology at the University of Malta may be invited.

The meeting adjourned at 12.30pm.

Victor Agius  
Secretary