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Brussels, 23 February 2022

Dear Mr Pesonen,

Thank you for your letter of 14 January 2022, in which you informed me about your concerns regarding the process of reviewing the EU animal welfare legislation and in particular the decision to invite Dr Jane Goodall as keynote speaker in the Commission's stakeholders' conference 'EU Animal Welfare today and tomorrow', held on 9 December 2021.

The conference was followed by more than 500 participants who contributed in different forms to making this a very rich event. The hybrid formula of the event with the combination of several panel discussions with more than 50 experts involved, online direct polls, live-chats and the physical presence of participants interacting in the room allowed to have in-depth discussions on a wide-range of topics to be examined in the process of the revision of the animal welfare legislation. The event provided very useful input to the Commission and I would like to sincerely thank you for your participation in this conference.

I chose to invite Dr Jane Goodall as a keynote speaker because of her well established expertise on animal behaviour and her inspirational global perspective on animal welfare issues. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that her speech focussed on animal behaviours in a wider context. We are very proud of the EU's animal welfare standards, and our ambition is to ensure that the EU keeps its leading global position in the future. This requires an updating of a legislative acquis, that is between 10 and 25 years old, also by taking into account new scientific, technological and societal developments.

As regards Dr Jane Goodall's call to move towards more plant-based diets, I would recall that our conference as well as the forthcoming revision of the animal welfare legislation are both in the context of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. One of the main objectives of the strategy is to build a sustainable and resilient food chain that works for consumers, producers, climate and the environment. One of the actions to achieve this goal focusses on promoting sustainable food consumption and facilitating the shift to healthy, sustainable diets as

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“moving to a more plant-based diet with less red and processed meat and with more fruits and vegetables will reduce not only risks of life threatening diseases, but also the environmental impact of the food system”.

As mentioned in my opening speech at the conference, our ambition is to prepare a set of legislative proposals that will strike the right balance between raising animal welfare standards and maintaining economic sustainability, taking into account the important scientific steps acquired in these last decades since some of the current legislation was enacted.

The December conference was only one of several steps to collect views of all stakeholders in order to feed both the fitness check and the impact assessment that will support the legislative proposal to revise the EU animal welfare legislation.

Other stakeholders' consultation activities will provide additional input, including the Open Public Consultation, which closed at the end of last January, with almost 60,000 contributions, discussions in the EU Animal Welfare Platform and its subgroups, targeted surveys and interviews, and ad hoc discussions and input from stakeholders. Clearly, COPA-COGECA, AVEC, AnimalHealth Europe, AVEC, Clitravi, EFFAB, UECBV and other signatories of your letter are very important stakeholders for this review and we will continue to maintain an open and constructive dialogue with you, as it is my firm belief that every opinion counts and only by working together we can achieve the desired results in this endeavour.

Regarding your request for a meeting I would be delighted to meet you virtually on 15 June at 15.00.

Yours sincerely,

