Honorable Chief of Hellenic Police

Honorable guests

Dear friends,

It was such a pleasant surprise that this meeting is organized by initiative of Hellenic Police Chief.

Till today, most of the time animal welfare bodies had the initiative to organize similar events. This point is the distinctive difference between past and nowadays.

We believe that this difference means much more actions supporting animals on behalf of all ranks of the Hellenic Police Force.

I would like to focus on the following, just before I referred to these two particular subjects chosen to be presented today.

First of all, quite often police officers do not act ex officio on animal abuse cases. If they act, in the vast majority of cases, this happens after an accusation has been made or a lawsuit has been filed.

We strongly believe that Criminal Policy Initiative of the Hellenic Police for 2019 should include evaluation of the action of every Police Directorate or Police Department on animal abuse cases. It is necessary in order that police officers take all appropriate actions. We believe that the detailed results presentation of first semester 2019 will contribute that all ranks police officers act on their own volition.

We have already submitted the aforementioned suggestion and also a written suggestion for establishment of the institution “violation of the week” on issues related to the law n. 4039/2012. Both suggestions have received positive feedback but they have yet to be implemented.

Suggestions have been served by hand delivery.

They have been made steps forward and our Federation was the leader. However, we should mention that there is serious lack of knowledge about all animal legislation.

It is our strong belief that police officers will enrich their knowledge about animal legislation through the exceptional scientific work of Mr. Nikos Chryssakis (Deputy Commissioner of Lassithi Police Directorate) which has been sent to you for approval. It contains a full report, intuitive and descriptive, on multiform animal legislation.

**I would like to start by referring to hobbled animals**

We are going to watch a short video about hobbled farm animals and equines, an extremely torturous method which takes place widely in the islands of Cyclades and Dodecanese and many other areas of the country.

From 2015, our Federation deals systematically with this subject, which had been a major contribution to emergence of animals’ hobbling as a severe case of animal abuse.

Hobbling is a method used in prevention of an animal’s physical movement with extremely torturous and painful effects for a stock farmer, who should lead his flock, this extreme form of animal abuse prevents animals from getting to foreign property.

Hobbled animals cannot move, lie down or even raise their head. They suffer from infections which most of the times leads to mutilation or even to death.

The torture of these animals must stop! We ought to put an end to abuse! We ought to relieve these sentient beings of the torture. We ought to prove that Greece is a modern European country where animals are not abused!

Police officers will contribute significantly to the end of this illegality. At the same time, some other measures should be taken such as public information and development of education, of course.

We are quite often informed that police officers do not confirm administrative or criminal offences. Even if offences are confirmed, they are not imposed by the local veterinary services.

Honorable Minister, this should be stopped in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior. Otherwise, in case of breach of duty, the law should be implemented.

Honorable Chief of Police, we request that a bulletin is issued on behalf of you and sent to every Police Directorate and Department in the country, focusing that there is criminal prosecution and administrative fines in case of hobbling as it constitutes a form of animal abuse.

A similar bulletin has already been issued by Police Directorate in Cyclades but it is not in effect nationwide.

Secondly, I would like to refer to the online pet trade and illegal pet imports as well as illegal wildlife and exotic animals’ imports.

Thousands of domesticated animals are bred and sold illegally in Greece. Wildlife and exotic animals are illegally imported despite the existence of inspection authorities. At the same time, the political leadership and the departmental agents of Ministry of Rural Development and Food are not concerned about this major issue throughout the years, which among other consequences, it is the main cause of stray animals increase daily.

More than 6 years have passed since the law n. 4039/2012 was issued. However, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food has not yet issued a ministerial decree on requirements for animal breeding and trade.

The Kennel Club of Greece, without any inspection, gives plenty of pedigree and authenticity certificates for breeding animals for 21 euros. The vast majority of breeders who possibly trade these animals have not a license for breeding and trading animals.

Despite complaints of animal welfare bodies, being well-informed about the situation, the Prosecution of Cyber Crime do not act directly, efficiently and consistently, against the continuous online crime and illegality contributed via internet.

Every day thousands of animals can be found for sale on numerous websites. In Greece, thousands of people breed dogs at their house of at places with poor conditions. Thousands of animals are brutally abuse and component authorities are not interested in this issue at all.

Next, we are going to watch two videos which show the illegal breeding and trade of animals, source of hundreds of millions of euros of black money.

We are going to watch the crime that happens everywhere without anyone cares about it except animal welfare organizations which make efforts voluntarily to confront the crime.

Also, these videos show everything that happens inside the puppy mills of countries in the south of Greece. Each year thousands of sick animals of these puppy mills are imported illegally in the country. In addition, illegal puppy mills all around the country are displayed.

The term “puppy mills” is used for large-scale commercial dog breeding operations where most of the puppies have genetic health problems and law genetic quality. Without exaggeration, there are factories of massive dog breeding, well-known for appalling conditions where these puppies are given birth and then they are taken away from their mothers.

Displaying these two videos, we target the component authorities. Firstly, we target their sense, then their sense of duty and why not their sensibility.

In order that this crime is reduced of it is totally eliminated.

Shocking images taken inside alleged puppy mills.

Animals are packed in dirty cages full with feces or cages with grid grounds which hurt animals’ legs. They are exposed to weather conditions, in dark cages without ever see sunlight.

There is no veterinary care, female dogs give birth with little or no recovery time between litters and most of them die. These female dogs being exhausted, they die or they euthanized because they could not give birth anymore. They are treated like consumable items.

Finally, I will recount the personal experience, that I found on the internet, of a Greek vet that she had nursed some of these dogs.

I would like to share with you my personal experience about a female dog from a notorious puppy mill brought to the veterinary clinic.

“Phobic and exhausted animals, kept in filthy conditions, sarcoptic mange and purulent staphylococcal dermatitis covered their entire body, full of fleas, ticks and intestinal worms. They had severe chronic otitis and rotten teeth as a result of malnutrition.

I could not determine these dogs age, as they look like overage! Most of them had become weak and anemic as an effect of malnutrition and ehrlichiosis. Being kept in appalling conditions with low hygiene levels, incomplete vaccination, without being removed fleas and worms, and with inadequate veterinary care. These animals looked exhausted and abandoned. Actually, they were seriously abused.

With continuous, persistent and ex officio actions, we request that you stop this crime conducted everywhere around us, through the internet, in Schisto and every similar place.

It is a crime imported to Greece, conducted in Greece.

Thank you in advance. We hope that you take direct actions.

Natassa Bombolaki

President of Panhellenic Animal Welfare and Environmental Federation (PFPO)