

PETITION REACHES HALF A MILLION NAMES

The global petition for a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW) has reached its first half million signatories. The milestone ties in with mounting political support for the Declaration.

The 500,000th signatory is Gitte Seeberg, Member of the European Parliament from Denmark. She's echoed the support of Government Ministers and authorities concerned with animal welfare from all over the world:

“We have an obligation to treat animals in a proper manner. The road towards better animal welfare is through cooperation, information and a strong international commitment. The determination to do something is there, along with wide support for the initiative. We have to make sure that these fine declarations are followed up by action.”

International actress Miranda Richardson is one of a growing number of celebrities backing the Declaration. She says:

“The Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare would have a massive impact on law making throughout the world and have the power to make so many animals lives so much better.”

Political support for the Declaration has been pouring into the offices of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), which is acting as the official secretariat. Letters of support have been received from Ministers and Senior Officials within the Governments of Australia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Philippines, Poland, New Zealand and Slovenia as well as from the Commission for Health and Consumer Protection of the European Community.

Peter Davies, Director General of WSPA said:

“This is an exciting time for the UDAW initiative. Reaching the landmark figure of half a million signatures is a tremendous achievement.”

Support for the Declaration is also growing among International Organisations. Last week the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), representing the Chief Veterinarian Officers of over 160 countries gave its official backing to the development of the Declaration.

The inter-governmental initiative for a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare is being spearheaded by a steering group of five nations: Costa Rica, Czech Republic, India, Kenya and the Philippines.

Once formally adopted by a significant majority of the world's nations the Declaration will provide a badly needed foundation for an international framework on animal welfare legislation.

At the moment there are no internationally agreed laws that govern the welfare of animals. But there is increasing appreciation that the sentience of animals, now officially recognized within the EU and by the OIE, deserves full international consideration.

To sign the petition, go to: www.animalsmatterusa.org