



ROYAL MINISTRY
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Norway requests WTO consultations on EU ban on trade in seal products

Norway has today formally requested WTO dispute settlement consultations, because the Government views the EU ban on trade in seal products as being in contravention of WTO rules. “In our view, the EU decision is contrary to WTO rules on a number of key points. We will not let this go uncontested. We have therefore requested formal WTO dispute settlement consultations today,” said Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

Both Norway and Canada have requested WTO dispute settlement consultations following the EU’s decision on 16 September to ban trade in seal products. The decision was first formally published on 31 October 2009, enabling Norway and Canada to now request WTO consultations. The ban will enter into force on 20 August 2010.

“This is an important matter of principle for the Government. Seal hunting is an integral part of the Norwegian marine mammal policy and fisheries management regime. The ban undermines our possibilities of carrying out sound, ecosystem-based management of natural resources, and it sets a dangerous precedent for trade in products that are harvested in a sustainable manner,” commented State Secretary Vidar Ulriksen of the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs.

The request for consultations is formally the first step in the WTO dispute settlement system. The objective of the consultations is to investigate whether it is possible to find a mutually agreed solution to a trade dispute. If the parties to the dispute fail to agree, the complaining party may request the establishment of a WTO panel, which acts as a kind of arbitration body. According to WTO rules, consultations must be entered into no later than 30 days after the date the of receipt of the request for consultations, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.