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## COMPETING INTERESTS

H.H.-D. has received honoraria and fees for consulting related to the Internationally Legally Binding Instrument on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ treaty) from the Deep-Ocean Stewardship Initiative, High Seas Alliance, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

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# Trophy hunting undermines public trust

In March, one of the largest brown bears in Europe was shot in the Eastern Carpathians, Romania. A member of one of Europe's royal families allegedly paid at least EUR7000 for the hunt (1), even though the brown bear is strictly protected in Romania and bear trophy hunting is banned (2). The government's tolerance of trophy hunts and inadequate oversight of hunting permits threaten protected species and undermine public trust.

Under provisions of Article 16(1) of the EU Habitats Directive, the national wildlife authority can grant permission for lethal removal of brown bears if a bear is deemed a repeated threat to livestock, crops, or human life (3). However, the local wildlife administrators allowed trophy hunting by issuing a permit, approved by the Ministry of Environment and the local Environmental Protection Agency, that was intended for a nuisance animal. The event

is under investigation as wildlife crime (4).

In Romania, wildlife authorities are mandated by law to protect people's lives and livelihoods through lethal and nonlethal management of problem bears (1). In this case, the authorities breached public trust by not enforcing current legislation and giving game managers, often private entities, complete control over which animal is removed and when. Thus, wildlife authorities failed to protect people's livelihoods and enabled an illegal trophy hunt of a nonoffending bear. This event shows that wildlife species in Romania are still at the mercy of the rich and powerful (5) despite being protected by European legislation (3).

To regain the trust of local communities and society at large, the Romanian government must deliver and enforce effective legislation that allows for accountable management of nuisance animals. Transparent large carnivore management should be rooted in social realities and the best available science and capitalize on the opportunities afforded by the trophy hunt ban to facilitate positive change (6). The European Commission can actively assist member states to manage the increasingly abundant and conflictual large carnivore populations.

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# Brazil's doomed environmental licensing

On 13 May 2021, Brazil's Chamber of Deputies approved bill 3729/2004 (1, 2), which essentially abolishes environmental licensing. The procedural changes outlined by the bill will have catastrophic effects on Brazil's environment. The February 2021 takeover of both houses of

Congress by a coalition of parties supporting President Jair Bolsonaro's positions on the environment (3) practically guarantees that the bill will soon be approved by the Federal Senate and then signed by Bolsonaro. Nevertheless, efforts to influence the Senate vote, in addition to legal challenges, can and must continue.

The bill creates a new "general law for environmental licensing" that allows any project, including highways, ports, railways, and large dams, to be built under a kind of self-licensing by means of a mere "declaration of adhesion and commitment" by the proponent affirming intention to abide by requirements established by the licensing authority. This means that licenses will be issued automatically without any analysis by technical staff in the environmental agencies. For some types of projects, even this token declaration will be unnecessary, including projects for agriculture (and biofuels), cattle ranching, low-voltage electricity distribution, and water and sewage treatment systems. The bill essentially eliminates public participation in the process, as well as the roles of agencies such as the Chico Mendes Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and the National Foundation of the Indian, which are responsible, respectively, for conservation units (protected areas for biodiversity) and for guaranteeing rights of Indigenous peoples.

One of the first Amazonian infrastructure projects likely to benefit from the new licensing procedures is the planned reconstruction of the environmentally disastrous Highway BR-319, which, together with its planned side roads, would open a vast area of Amazonia to deforestation (4). Amazon deforestation contributes to climate change and loss of ecosystem services with consequences for Brazil and for the entire world. The effective end to environmental licensing will make it much more difficult for countries importing Brazilian commodities to identify imports whose production and transport are not tied to deforestation and associated land grabbing and violation of the rights of traditional peoples (5, 6).

The vice-president of Brazil's Senate has announced the intention to hold public hearings before the vote on the bill (7). The Federal Public Ministry (a public prosecutor's office for defending the rights of the people) has analyzed the bill and considers it unconstitutional (8). This is important in both the legislative and the legal battles but is no guarantee of the bill's defeat in either the legislature or the courts. In addition to discussion in