



Welcome Speech by Willy Schraen
President of the French National Hunters Federation
69th General Assembly
Opening Ceremony

Paris, France

21 April, 2023

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President of the CIC, Dr. Philipp Harmer,

Head of the French Delegation, Mr. Emmanuel Michau,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Presidents and representatives of the Delegations present today,

Dear friends of hunting,

Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to thank the CIC for the gift I received two years ago in Budapest - where I could not go - which I received some time later in Paris.

It is always a privilege to participate in an event of the CIC and its French Delegation.

Thank you to Philipp Harmer, your President, for having chosen Paris for this 69th General Assembly of your organization.

In Paris, almost 100 years ago in 1930, the need for an international organization working for the interests of hunters, conservation and biodiversity was first envisioned. The ancestor of the CIC was born.

This speaks to me all the more as the French federal hunting network, one of the densest and active in France, is also celebrating its 100th anniversary. With 94 FDCs and 13 FRCs, it is accredited for environmental protection, a guarantee of the hunters' commitment and their responsibility in the face of the challenges of our century: the safeguarding of biodiversity, global warming and ecosystem balance of nature through hunting.

What a long way the world's hunting has come, even if our current path seems to be one of the most dangerous we have ever taken. Every delegation present today will be able to testify to this.

It is the world of responsible hunting that is gathered here today. The theme chosen for your general assembly "Biodiversity 2030" is a major issue, because without biodiversity, there is no sustainable hunting, as we all know.

When I go hunting, I go into nature because I like to be there, and if at some point I kill an animal, it is in this particular context that I will do so and not simply to kill.

This is the nuance that every hunter knows, feels and understands. Hunting is a way of life.

My job is not hunting! It is my passion! It is yours! This is what should bring us together and unite us!

The regulation and preservation of ecosystem balance are the consequences of our passion. In no case can they be the cause.

To all those who want, in France or elsewhere, to limit us to a regulatory function, I say no.

Only recreational hunting will allow us to survive and will make young people want to join us, because they are the first to ask us for quality rather than quantity. I will come back to this later.

In France, we have nearly forty different hunting methods, territories with diversified ecosystems that make France a crossroads of biodiversity.

It is mainly this immoderate love that hunters have for nature that has allowed the preservation of a good number of biodiversity centers. Centers that would have surely disappeared under concrete or economic interests if passion had not guided their choices for generations!

In France, we have about 90 game species from the wild fauna, including about 60 huntable birds.

This is more than in other European countries, I know. This French specificity can be explained by the diversity and the quality of our biotopes, but France is also one of the most important migration routes for birds.

But it is also explained by the popular and accessible side of French hunting. We have here 4 million holders of hunting permits. And these 4 million people, with their families and

friends, work every day, each at their own level, to defend the richness of our national biodiversity.

The state has quantified the impact of the actions of French hunters on ecosystems. When we put down our weapons, and we are at the bedside of nature, it is 78 million hours of volunteer work and no less than 4 billion ecosystems that come to serve the ecological cause.

So who better than us to act for biodiversity?

Certainly not radical ecology and extremist animalism, which only have ideas without knowing the territories they are talking about, and moreover often without leaving their Parisian living room.

We, the French hunters, are committed actors in the service of nature.

Because that is what it is all about.

You all know something about this, as the CIC's contribution has been reinforced in the recently adopted 2030 Global Biodiversity Framework.

Restoring the truth about our practices means explaining the positive externalities of hunting, because hunters are nature's first volunteers.

In France, the lie about hunting is permanent. The French are lied to.

Worse, we terrorize them by considering that the worst is necessarily the best that can happen to us!

The limits are regularly crossed, when it comes to me personally. Being in the media, I am particularly exposed and I know that this is part of the "job" as they say, even if it is sometimes difficult.

To be President of the hunters of a country, and to live permanently with his family under police protection and to receive death threats every day, it is from now on the price to pay when one defends a legal activity like hunting, in a democracy which must normally be a guarantor of the rights and freedoms of each of its citizens.

As you probably know, I have to fight back, which means that at the moment I am dealing with no less than 400 people that I have summoned to appear before the courts to obtain compensation for these gratuitous acts of violence against me or my family.

From conviction to conviction, I am in the process of silencing them little by little. No impunity can be accepted when it comes to the defense of our passion, and we must not let anything pass! This must be the golden rule for all of us!

Through the responsible practice of their activity, hunters participate in the conservation of the biological resources on territories.

French hunters are owners and managers of natural areas, where they implement effective conservation measures.

The hunters' federations and the *Fondation pour la préservation de la nature* support this protection policy.

The French National Hunters Federation (FNC) participates in new and ambitious scientific programs to improve knowledge of species, which guarantees sustainable hunting.

Nicolas Rivet, Director General of the FNC, and their Scientific Director, Pascal Labepie, will present a large-scale project that consists of tracking migratory birds using 7 radars.

As I speak, 22 million usable signals are already available to the scientific community.

French hunters are also invested in public service missions. Proof that the state trusts us. It is, however, easy to understand and to verify this everywhere in nature: Protection cannot be done without management! And management cannot be done without hunting!

And for those who doubt it, it is enough to take the example of territories where hunting has been forbidden, to realize that at one time or another it will have to be reintroduced in one form or another.

This reality is too often passed over in silence. It is our responsibility to make it known! I am sure that in each of your countries, you have initiatives to put forward. So, what are we waiting for. To say it all together with strength?

I know that last year, your General Assembly in Riga, which I was unable to attend, focused on the challenges of communication.

"Conserve - Convene - Communicate" was your theme for exploring how best to communicate while increasing the CIC's power to mobilize.

One of your key messages was that to communicate effectively, an organization must be in tune with its identity and core roots.

Clearly, I fully embrace this principle. Let's not disguise who we are out of weakness or convenience. Let's stay the course, which for me is the defense of sustainable and popular hunting.

Popular is not a dirty word, because numbers make the numbers, as they say.

Here we are heard by the different governments because France has many hunters, from all social classes and all backgrounds. It is a strength and it is the DNA of hunting in France!

That is why we have support from all political parties, as we saw when the greens recently wanted to ban hunting on Sundays. So I don't want hunting to be reserved only for the elite. In today's French society, it would have no chance of surviving.

In Europe, there are 7 million hunters. The CIC represents 86 countries on 5 continents.

It is becoming urgent to federate this great community to which we belong so that it speaks with one voice, and that it acts on an economy of scale which has not yet revealed one tenth of its possibilities.

Hunting is our rural heritage, but also tradition, transmission, sharing, conviviality, but above all the practice of pure happiness!

We must share this message together and simultaneously to give it exceptional strength.

This must become our strategy, because it is our salvation to unite in shared actions, which will then take on a strength in their effectiveness that we will never be able to achieve if we continue to work alone in our respective continents.

The attack against our rural values is worldwide, and for those who still think they are safe, let them not be reassured too quickly, it will not last much longer.

But what to think of these few officials of the European Commission who also sweep away this cultural and ecological heritage with a wave of the hand, by explaining, without laughing, that there are alternatives to our so-called traditional hunts, i.e. breeding or shooting with guns?

Let's remember, however, that these ancestral hunting practices, transmitted from generation to generation, only concern a small quota of hunting!

From there, we understand perfectly well that the problem is not the loss of biodiversity or the mistreatment of animals by these hunts, but is akin to dogmatic radical ecology.

Of course, behind all this is also the will to erase all traces of our respective histories. A people that no longer knows where it comes from will always be easier to guide!

And at a moment of our collective history, where the food of tomorrow becomes a major economic stake, what could be more dangerous than to keep people who live in nature and who consume its resources!

We represent a serious danger for all those people who want to create food without connections to the life which surrounds us, and especially to ensure a dependence of the human species to new food concepts, far from the food autonomy in which we live.

To continue to eat the fruits of our hunts at all costs is a collective issue on a global scale that is becoming essential.

To say it and to make it known, together, is one of the great subjects which the CIC must seize.

In Europe, we are dependent on the goodwill of a few European technocrats who theorize about nature and consider hunting to be one of the main threats to biodiversity despite all the clear evidence to the contrary.

The European authorities must stop dictating on the rural way of life, and I acknowledge the work of President Larson of FACE to fight this permanent extremism every day.

This is why hunters and rural people must now have a say in the elections, especially in those that will take place in Europe in May 2024.

If in Europe, where the network has often crossed the political storms against us on a global scale, we have to say that today the political cards are being reshuffled, and from now on we will have political movements in all the countries of the world which will base their electoral program on the pure and simple prohibition of numerous rural practices.

In order to fight this demagogic drift of banning rather than thinking, the CIC will have to make an existential choice in the near future.

We can no longer exercise our sole power of influence in the shadows, because the "live well live hidden" is slowly dying.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have little time left in view of the seriousness of the situation, and I believe that the CIC must become the organization that will unite all the rural forces of this planet.

Unity in collective global action, or else it will be the solitary disappearance, one by one, of our respective ways of life.

The question we must ask ourselves today, my friends, is whether or not we want to pass on to our children with certainty what we have received from our parents?

What better country than France, which invented the very concept of individual freedoms, to finally say with one voice "stop" to these relentless attacks against us.

Like all of you in your respective countries, the French National Hunters Federation fights every day to try to pass on this way of life that is ours.

As you know, for the past three years, the FNC and therefore French hunters have made an appointment with television viewers.

We do not advertise on television for the simple pleasure of doing so, but because the more hunting is explained, the more it is accepted by our fellow citizens. All the "post-test" analyses show this.

The FNC's new 30-second TV spot takes the approach of explaining the real contribution of hunters to society.

When we understand hunting, we also understand the relationship that must exist between people, animals and nature.

We kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. Last year's TV spot was seen 287 million times. Of course, it is a lot of money to spend each year, since we have a communication

budget of 4 million euros per year to explain and thus make people understand and love hunting.

But all this is starting to pay off! If we still have a slight decrease in the number of hunters validating a hunting license each year, we have to admit that we have never had so many applications for a hunting license.

Mainly young people, often from urban areas, or to break the physical loneliness of social networks, are approaching us and of course our timeless values.

Passion, sharing, conviviality, transmission, family spirit, and of course the pleasure of being a link in the mechanisms of nature, are all arguments that strike a chord with these young people who are desperately seeking themselves in a virtual society that no longer meets their expectations.

So we have uprooted young people who will inevitably ask themselves the question of whether or not to follow Greta Thunberg.

It is up to us to offer them an alternative in a humanized and shared nature by practicing hunting, rather than following a Swedish guru, who looks as cheerful as a depressive cocker spaniel, living in a nature that we would only have the right to look at, but above all never to touch!

However, we have a great glimmer of hope, as we are now seeing women coming into our passion in droves. Although only 3% of our members are women, we have about 20% of women registered for the hunting license exam.

I have said it often, and I repeat it today before you, women are the future of hunting. Of course, it is up to us to know how to welcome them and integrate them into the great family of world hunting.

And I am going to give you one last example, the history of the anti-hunting group AVA (Abolish Hunting Today) composed mainly of young girls, who physically and violently oppose hounds. Well, on the other hand, those who hunt with hounds have organized themselves and entered a dialogue. They have succeeded in converting some of them who are now hunting! This illustrates perfectly all that I have just told you.

So today I wanted to open up these lines of thought to you, and to tell you once again that I believe more than ever in the CIC, provided that we do not miss this opportunity that is offered to us!

More than ever, we must work together and go beyond our regular meetings. It is urgent that we write together an indelible page of our common history.

I know I can count on you, know that the French hunters are through me ready to follow you.

Long live hunting and long live the CIC!