National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
Trg Nikole Pašića 13
11000 Belgrade
Republic of Serbia

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of Bont voor Dieren (Fur for Animals), a Dutch animal protection organisation dedicated to the rights and protection of all fur-bearing animals, I am writing you with regard to the Serbian ban on fur farming that is to take effect on January 1st 2019.

We were alarmed to find that the Serbian legislation to end fur farming was discussed during a regular meeting of the Sector for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the National Assembly of Serbia, held on 20 February 2018.

In accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2009, the Serbian ban on the widely-condemned practice of fur farming is due to become effective in 2019. In the last nine years Serbian fur farmers have thus been given the opportunity to transition to a more economically stable and sustainable industry. With less than one year left before the transitional period runs out, any change to the previously agreed upon legislation would raise serious questions regarding the Serbian legislative process.

The fact is that, in the last two decades, 16 European countries have voted for legislation to end or limit fur farming, most recently the Czech Republic and Germany. Due to the significant ethical concerns and serious animal welfare problems associated with fur farming, legislation to ban the cruel practice entirely has been passed in the United Kingdom, Austria, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Czech Republic and in the Walloon and Brussels regions of Belgium. Even in Norway and in Denmark – the heartlands of the fur farming industry – legislators have taken steps, to either ban the industry entirely (Norway) or partially (fox farming is banned in Denmark), on the grounds of animal welfare. Hungary is another country where a partial ban on fur farming is in place.

Due to stricter welfare regulations, fur farming has been entirely phased out in Switzerland and partially phased out in Sweden, where neither foxes nor chinchillas can be bred for fur. Recently the German government voted for stricter regulations that will see fur farms in Germany close their doors by 2022. Furthermore, debates on fur farming bans are currently ongoing in Poland, Luxembourg and Belgium.

Public opinion polls consistently show that fur farming is considered unacceptable by the majority of citizens in countries across Europe. There is an increasing awareness on animal welfare issues and ethical concerns on the uses to which animals are put in society. It is therefore of upmost importance that political discussions on chinchilla farming are factually correct and supported by science.

Both the short-tailed chinchilla and the long-tailed chinchilla are listed as critically endangered species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources List of Threatened Species. Short-tailed chinchillas are considered to be extinct in Bolivia and Peru, but are suspected to be recovering in other areas. In 1996, there were only 42 colonies of long-tailed chinchillas left, and the population has declined ever since. The fur industry’s claim that breeding chinchillas for fur benefits the conservation of the species is incorrect, indeed it is the fur trade itself that is responsible for the depletion of the species.

Given the fact that chinchillas are the only animals kept for fur in Serbia, it is important that scientific facts on chinchilla farming are taking into consideration when fur farming legislation is at stake. A large number of veterinarians and animal welfare experts agree that it is impossible to ensure the welfare of chinchillas in factory farms. Keeping chinchillas in small cages prevents them from running and jumping (a species-specific behaviour of chinchillas), and from engaging in social behaviour that would satisfy their natural needs. Although chinchillas in nature are monogamous, under fur farming conditions they are forced to mate with multiple males, by wearing a polygamous necklace that restrains them from moving. Furthermore, the unnatural conditions in which chinchillas are kept and bred causes stress related abnormal stereotypical behaviour, fear, reproductive disorders and offspring mortality.

The natural life expectancy of chinchillas is between 10 and 20 years, but chinchillas bred for fur live 8 months on average. To prevent damaging their pelts, chinchillas are electrocuted on Serbian fur farms, a killing method that is widely condemned as inhumane.

Animal fur is a non-essential fashion product which cannot be produced in an ethical way. Animals bred for fur are kept in tiny wire mesh cages for their entire lives and killed by inhumane, painful methods. In today’s society, modern consumers are increasingly aware of the animal welfare problems on fur farms and are not willing to buy products of extreme animal cruelty. Consequently, an increasing number of international fashion houses are making commitments to drop animal fur from their collections.

We urge Serbia to stay true to your legislative commitment to ban the farming of animals for fur. We ask that you uphold the wishes of the public and the politicians who voted in favour of the Animal Welfare Act 2009 and end this internationally condemned industry from operating in your country, as previously agreed, by January 1st 2019.

Yours sincerely,