

# Canada, EU trade talks unaffected by seal ban: Day

Tue Apr 28, 2009 12:27pm EDT

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WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Negotiations on a free trade deal between Canada and the European Union will not be affected by the EU's plan to ban imports of seal products, Trade Minister Stockwell Day said on Tuesday.

"It's two separate tracks. The EU discussions will continue," Day said in an interview with Reuters financial television.

Canada and the EU are set next week to formally begin the talks to boost trade by lowering tariffs on goods and services.

But European ambassadors last week approved a plan to ban imports of seal products. The ban must be approved by the European Parliament, which will consider it next month.

Canada, Greenland and Namibia account for about 60 percent of the 900,000 seals hunted each year.

The 15 seal species hunted are not endangered but European politicians demanded action after finding what they said was evidence that many are skinned while still conscious.

Canada has said it will challenge the ban at the World Trade Organization because it follows guidelines to ensure its seal hunt is humane and environmentally sustainable.

"We hope we don't have to pursue the WTO approach if there's a seal ban, but we have served notice we will do that if necessary," Day said.

(Reporting by Roberta Rampton; Editing by Eric Beech)