

# Green Friends

## Urgent Whaling Alert

June 12, 2010

### Whale Hunting May Be Revived after Impending Vote

**Agadir, Morocco** - In less than two weeks, 22 June, the International Whaling Commission will vote here on whether or not to legalize whaling, which was banned by the Commission in 1982. A 10 May press release by the Chair and Vice Chair contended that 320 whales per year would be saved through a compromise deal, which would legalize whaling but - purportedly - therefore allow it to be properly regulated. (Take action on page 2)

**The 1982 moratorium** came into effect in the '85-'86 Southern and 86 Northern Hemisphere seasons. Japan formally objected initially, but later dropped the objection and continued whaling by simply labeling the activity "scientific research". Norway has yet to drop its formal objection, continuing to this day to conduct commercial whaling in the North Atlantic. Iceland did not object, but, like Japan, conducted "research" until 1989, then in 1992 dropped out of the IWC, rejoining 10 years later with a retroactive "reservation" with regard to the moratorium, and recommenced whaling in 2006. [7]

In 2007 the IWC began a process into the "Future of the IWC", creating a small commission (around a dozen persons) to look for a sustainable, agreeable solution. The newly proposed deal would have international observers onboard whaling ships, DNA registry to track whale meat, and even allow NGOs to speak at IWC meetings. The catch is: legalize whaling.

**The deal** has many elements meant to lure in the anti-whaling conservationists, for example the creation of a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. There is no whaling in the South Atlantic, no groups ever proposed starting, and whales are creatures that cover then entire expanse of sea. The existing South Ocean Whale Sanctuary was adopted by 23 countries in the IWC (except Japan) but still faces whaling problems (from Japan). Japan has killed most of its whales in this sanctuary, notably the endangered (officially listed as "endangered", not yet crit-

ically) fin whale; and under this deal Iceland, Norway, and Japan would be allowed to, for a further 10 years, continue whaling without any need for justification. [7] [5]

The number of whales each country will be allowed to hunt is still under discussion. Sources suggest the total for all three will be around 1000, with 400 coming from the South Ocean Sanctuary. These numbers would be less than currently hunted, but more than some years ago.

**The whale market** does not exist in the world today. Whale meat cannot be sold. Yet if this draft is adopted, the market will revamp. Japan is already preparing to buy a new whaling ship [1] (it's current flagship is decades old and has twice caught fire). With public pressure growing, ships decaying, and a diminishing market (where one can be found) would end whaling completely in a few years. If the market jumps back, the industries grow stronger, lobbying becomes more powerful, and Japan will get a new fleet ready to last the next moratorium. Whether or not the fin whale survives the quota set in this draft proposal is a good question.

Biologist and mathematician Dr. Justin Cooke, author of the Revised Management Procedure for the IWC, had this to say of the draft proposal:

"The proposal as written is disingenuous and I suspect that it will fool many people. It fooled me on first reading. The true nature of the scam only dawned on me after reading the text several times. And even then only with the benefit of many years of experience with IWC procedures, that enables me to relate such a text to how it would actually be implemented in practice. Those without the benefit of such experience will find it even harder to discern what the text really implies and to spot the scam. I consider the move to sideline the Scientific Committee and to sidestep accepted scientific procedures to be a retrograde step and to be very unwise." [6]

**A strong hand** exists for the anti-whaling nations and lobbies, ironically. They may cave in, yet

catches are shrinking despite quotas rising. Vasilis Papastravrou of IFAW points out Norway is increasingly abandoning pursuits halfway through the season, and Japan is under public pressure. *The New York Times* even reports that Japan's own people are breaking social taboos to criticize the government-run whaling campaigns in the Antarctic, saying it brings international criticism and threatens the more limited local coastal hunts. [3] Not the noblest reason to oppose large-scale whaling, but it's part of a critical shift in even Japanese culture. Formerly viewed as Western imperialism, anti-whaling sentiment is growing there, and the year-old government of the Democratic Party may

not be as staunchly pro-whaling as the Liberal Democrats. Still: "We can't change now because it would look like giving in," said Mr. Kodaira, a lawmaker from the northern island of Hokkaido. "Will we have to give up tuna next?" Interestingly enough, Japan's tuna-fishing practices are another ecological catastrophe.

**22 June** is decision day. Some governments have vowed to vote against it, including New Zealand, which has thanked many organizations for petitions against the deal. Foreign Affairs Minister Murray McCully said "I personally think [the deal's] offensive." [8] Will the others agree?

Read the draft proposal online or get the pdf straight.

## Parsing the Deal

**Sidney Holt**, marine biologist and writer for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, has called out many of the claims by the IWC, sharply condemning facades of protecting whales. In response to the 10 May press release that 320 whales would be saved per year he retorted "Big deal!"

He wrote that "[t]he 1982 decision setting all catch limits to zero 'saved' 11,000 whales per year, discounting the hundreds that Norway and Japan continued to kill after 1986 using loopholes in the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling." [4] The press release said "the numbers are below ... those that a group of scientists from both whaling and non-whaling countries agreed would be sustainable over the 10-year period." Holt replied:

A reader would reasonably believe that the "group of scientists" referred to had some connection with the IWCs Scientific Committee, which is the most authoritative body concerning the science of managing whaling and conserving whales. But not at all. It was a group chosen by the politically selected "Chairmans Support Group" of a few Governments, led by Sir Geoffrey Palmer, ex-Prime Minister of New Zealand, who labeled it the Scientific Assessment Group, consisting of

eight members from the Government of Japan, one each from Iceland and Norway, and one each from five non-whaling countries. There were some very competent scientists on it — one especially, Dr Justin Cooke, the prime creator of the IWCs Revised Management Procedure but they met for just two days and could not possibly have applied, as insinuated, the RMP to give the suggested ten-year catch limits that later appeared in the Chairmans Report that will be considered by the IWC when it meets in Morocco in June.

**The South Ocean Sanctuary** would be reopened by the deal. Japan already hunts there, but would henceforth be legally allowed to, and to profit by selling its meat from the catches there. Heather Sohl, species policy officer for WWF-UK, said: "If there is one place on Earth where whales should have full protection, it is the Southern Ocean. Some whales feed exclusively in the Southern Ocean not eating at all during the winter months when they travel up to tropical waters. Allowing commercial whaling in an area where whales are so vulnerable goes against all logic." [2] The Pew Environment Group agrees, with international policy director Susan Lieberman saying "The safe haven of the IWC-declared Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary and the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling should be set in stone, not set aside."

## Act to End Whaling

Avaaz sends its petition to the governments of the IWC every time another 100,000 signatures are reached. Moreover, it is funding a massive publicity campaign in Agadir, including billboards at the airport and newspaper ads, to make the voting members aware of the public will against whaling. Sign the petition: [http://www.avaaz.org/en/whales\\_under\\_threat/98.php?CLICKTF](http://www.avaaz.org/en/whales_under_threat/98.php?CLICKTF)

Or donate to the advertising campaign:

[https://secure.avaaz.org/en/whales\\_massive\\_push\\_4/?fbpnote6-10](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/whales_massive_push_4/?fbpnote6-10)

## Notice

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## References

- [1] Avaaz.org.
- [2] Emily Beament. Conservationists condemn 'peace plan' allowing for limited whaling. *The Guardian*, 23 April 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/apr/23/conservationists-peace-plan-whaling-iwc>.
- [3] Martin Fackler. Uncertainty Buffets Japans Whaling Fleet. *The New York Times*, 15 May 2010.
- [4] Sidney Holt. Saving whales by scams. *IFAW Whale Blog*, 20 May 2010. <http://www.mywhaleweb.com/?p=5475>.
- [5] IWC. Chair's Report to the Small Working Group on the Future of the IWC.
- [6] Kieran Mulvaney. The whaling deal: it's all in the numbers. *Discovery News*, 20 May 2010. <http://news.discovery.com/earth/the-whaling-deal-its-all-in-the-numbers.html>.
- [7] Kieran Mulvaney. Whales and whaling: Deal or no deal? *Discovery News*, 23 February 2010. <http://news.discovery.com/earth/whales-and-whaling-deal-or-no-deal.html>.
- [8] Kara Segedin. IWC whaling proposal 'offensive'. *New Zealand Herald*, 23 April 2010.

## Links

If simply clicking any of the hypertext links has failed you, you can copy the full URL into your web-browser here.

The draft proposal to end whaling, available through Google Docs:  
[https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.iwcoffice.org/\\_documents/commission/future/IWC-M10-SWG4.pdf](https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://www.iwcoffice.org/_documents/commission/future/IWC-M10-SWG4.pdf)

The draft proposal as a PDF, from the IWC directly:  
[http://www.iwcoffice.org/\\_documents/commission/future/IWC-M10-SWG4.pdf](http://www.iwcoffice.org/_documents/commission/future/IWC-M10-SWG4.pdf)