



**Opening Statement to the 58<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the International Whaling  
Commission  
June 2006**

**Whales and Humans Do Not Compete for Fish**

Pro-whaling interests claim that whales may be having a negative impact on commercially valuable fish species by causing their decline or preventing recovery and therefore should be culled. However, historic industrial whaling reduced many stocks to near extinction and the number of whales today is a mere fraction of what it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Pro-whaling nations nevertheless persist in presenting this self-serving argument in numerous international fora. Unfortunately, many countries have accepted it because it lets human activities such as commercial fishing off the hook for fisheries collapses.

There's no question that many of the world's fish populations are in serious decline. However, human over-fishing and fisheries mismanagement have done this damage, not natural predators. Over seventy percent of global stocks are being fished at full or over capacity, leading several to collapse. Whales, on the other hand, are a natural part of these complex ecosystems. They are also victims of incidental catch by some commercial fisheries, as are other non-target fish.

Whales and their prey have co-existed, without the whales depleting their prey, for millennia. The newcomers to the marine ecosystem are the industrial fishing fleets, capable of removing many tons of fish in a single set of a net or long-line. The way to restore any upset in the "balance of nature" is to reduce industrial fishing fleet pressures, not remove natural predators.

Indeed, Humane Society International (HSI) cautions that killing whales to preserve fish would have unknown consequences and might well further jeopardize fish populations by causing food web disruptions. Whales may also eat *other* predators of fish targeted by commercial fisheries, leading to a population increase in those predators and a subsequent further depletion of fish stocks.

Recent modeling indicates that most food consumed by whales consists of prey types that fisheries do not target. Further, whales consume most of their food in areas where humans do not fish. It is the continuation of present fisheries

management approaches and the export of fisheries products from developing countries – not whales – that endanger world food security.

While there may be local areas of conflict between marine mammals and fishing vessels, these conflicts can usually be resolved without resorting to killing the marine mammals by using methods such as gear modification or acoustic deterrent devices. Broadly culling predators has been discredited by the scientific and progressive management communities and is not considered an effective way to increase prey populations. Ecosystems and food web interactions are too complex for such simplistic “solutions.”

### **Humane Killing**

HSI firmly believes that all present methods of killing whales are inhumane because, among other problems, they do not routinely or reliably render the animals instantaneously insensible. Immediate insensibility is a requirement in any definition of “humane” in humane slaughter laws.

The IWC has been concerned with whale killing methods since 1957 when it defined “humane killing” as the process by which the animal is rendered instantaneously insensible until death supervenes. In spite of this, very little progress has been made on this issue. The criteria for ensuring a painless death for cetaceans should be consistent with laws protecting other animals. HSI strongly supports IWC enacting and implementing strict humane standards for whale killing. It is politically, legally, and ethically inconsistent to require humane slaughter methods for certain animals but not for others.

### **RMS**

At the March 2006 RMS in Cambridge, negotiations on the RMS appeared to stall. The recommendation was to continue discussions but not in a formal setting. HSI disagrees with this strategy. If any discussion continues on the RMS, it needs to be done within the Commission and not amongst a select group of members. To ensure transparency and the incorporation of best practices, the negotiations on an RMS must be open to all members and NGO participation.

Despite positions stating otherwise, adopting an RMS will not and cannot stop or control whaling which is currently conducted outside the moratorium. Each year more whales and species are killed, and the Commission has no way of controlling this expansion without amending the treaty. The RMS is not a panacea for unsustainable and uncontrolled whaling.

The most recent RMS draft does not contain even the minimal implementation and enforcement measures found in modern fisheries management organizations. Problems with the current draft include lack of adequate funding for controlling whaling, no procedures for imposing sanctions to address violations, no

compliance mechanisms, and no welfare provisions. Most importantly, even if an RMS addressed the concerns mentioned above, it cannot stop the abuses of Article VIII - special permit research whaling, nor can it prevent countries from filing objections or rejoining with a reservation to any or all regulatory measures in an RMS.

If adopted, an RMS would be a management scheme in name only. It would provide no real safeguards for whale populations or for individual whales, and it would provide no real consequences to nations that flout the nominal rules it would impose. In short, the RMS would create the same sort of chaotic conditions that led to the moratorium in the first place.

### **High Level Meeting**

Since the moratorium went into effect in 1986, well over 24,000 whales have been killed. Instead of negotiating a flawed RMS, member governments would better serve whale conservation and bolster the reputation of the IWC by amending the Convention to close the loopholes and modernize its provisions. The unfettered right to issue special permits and to whale under reservation/objection must be removed from the ICRW. Moreover, new provisions allowing for enforcement and compliance, currently adopted in other fishery agreements, should be added to the Convention.

HSI therefore, supports amending the Convention to close the loopholes and add enforcement mechanisms as a way to restore credibility to the IWC and provide the necessary protection for whales.

### **Promoting the protection of all animals worldwide**

2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, USA • 1-301-248-3010 • Fax: 1-301-258-3082  
[www.protectwhales.org](http://www.protectwhales.org) • [www.hsihsus.org](http://www.hsihsus.org)

*NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations*