



## HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

March 11, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

In light of your imminent visit to Australia, where the issue of commercial whaling may be raised by your hosts, I would like to make you aware of our strong approval of Australia's leadership in the arena of whale protection. On behalf of the eleven million constituents of The Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International, I would also like to encourage you to use the occasion of your visit to acknowledge Australia's contributions to whale conservation through its funding of non-lethal science-based programs, its whale watching, and its political efforts aimed at the elimination of commercial whaling.

For Australia, the continuation of commercial whaling is a major political issue and the troublesome presence of the Japanese whaling fleet in Australian-claimed territorial waters in Antarctica, in particular, is a foreign policy issue of priority concern. During the last two decades Australia has been one of the strongest of the so-called "conservation minded" nations at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and other forums in which whaling is discussed and, until recently, the United States has stood right beside them. At the recent St. Petersburg, Florida meeting of the IWC Support Group, Australia distinguished itself by challenging the compromise proposal which suspends the commercial whaling moratorium for ten years, condones a certain amount of commercial whaling, and legitimizes special permit ("scientific") whaling.

For more than four decades, the United States consistently played a critical and preeminent role in whale conservation. But in recent years the mantle of leadership has passed to Australia. We believe that it would be a mistake for the United States to align itself with the compromise package that emerged from the St. Petersburg meeting, and we agree with Australia's assessment that it demands too many first-order concessions from those nations, including the United States, that have long been committed to ending commercial and special permit whaling.

The St. Petersburg package would represent a decisive shift in U. S. policy and, in our judgment, will not save whales, whose populations worldwide have yet to recover from unregulated, large-scale whaling of the past and the ongoing whaling by a few countries that refuse to stop. Moreover, whales are facing more threats than ever, including entanglement in commercial fishing gear, chemical and noise pollution, and global warming.



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Instead, we urge your Administration to give every consideration to the proposal offered by Australian Environment Minister Peter Garrett. The Australian approach calls for a phase out of all commercial and special permit whaling, and proposes a renegotiation of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) to address the defects of Article VIII, the mechanism by which large-scale commercial whaling continues under the guise of scientific research. In allowing a generous period of time for commercial and scientific whaling to be phased out, the Australian Government is also making a significant new concession in order to achieve a compromise and this will not be entirely popular with its domestic constituency.

The Australian proposal has many other merits, and will presumably be the focus of additional discussion during the run-up to the June 2010 IWC meeting in Agadir, Morocco. By signaling your appreciation for the approach Australia has forged in relation to this pressing international conservation concern, you would be taking a fundamental step toward re-establishing the United States' leadership role in whale protection worldwide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew N. Rowan".

Andrew N. Rowan  
President & CEO,  
Humane Society International