

JOINT DEMARCHE BY ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CHILE, COSTA RICA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, ECUADOR, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, IRELAND, ISRAEL, LUXEMBOURG, MEXICO, MONACO, THE NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PANAMA, PERU, PORTUGAL, SPAIN, SWEDEN, THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND URUGUAY

We, the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Costa Rica, The Czech Republic, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Monaco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The United Kingdom, The United States of America and Uruguay, wish to express our support for the Government of Iceland's decision to review and reassess its position on the hunting of whales.

We were deeply disappointed with the former Icelandic Government's decision to authorise the hunting of fin and minke whales over the next five years on 27 January 2009. The authorisation was put in place without presentation to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and without regard for the long term interests of cetacean conservation. We further note that the Icelandic Marine Research Institute recommended in June an increased quota of up to 200 fin and 200 minke whales for the 2009/2010 season and that almost 200 whales have been killed.

We encourage the Government of Iceland to adhere to the internationally agreed moratorium on commercial whaling and to re-examine the decision to increase its fin and minke whale quota.

Both species are listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix I and we remain extremely concerned with Iceland's reservation, entered in 2000, for these and other cetacean species. We urge Iceland to withdraw this reservation and safeguard these species from international trade.

We recognise the conservation efforts made by Iceland in other international agreements and hope the Icelandic Government will be able to extend this stance to fully support global efforts for cetacean conservation. Furthermore, we would like to draw attention to the considerable economic, social and educational benefits of Iceland's growing whale watching industry and share our strong endorsement of the Icelandic Government's plans to designate specific ocean areas for whale watching. We hope this action will reinforce Iceland's commitment, as a member of the Support Group, to the future of the IWC discussions on the management and conservation of all whale species.

In summary, we support the Icelandic Government's decision to reassess its position on commercial whaling and once again call upon Iceland to respect the IWC's global moratorium and end its commercial whaling.

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