

June 18, 2009

BY HAND DELIVERY

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to respectfully request that your administration immediately initiate concerted diplomatic efforts to encourage the Government of Japan to end its killing of whales for commercial purposes under the guise of science.

Since the commercial whaling moratorium went into effect in 1986, Japan has killed more than 12,000 minke, fin, Bryde's, sei, and sperm whales through its so-called "scientific" whaling activities conducted under 'special permit' pursuant to Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. Whale meat and other products from the hunts are sold for profit on the Japanese market despite the belief of the majority of International Whaling Commission (IWC) members that "Article VIII of the Convention is not intended to be exploited in order to provide whale meat for commercial purposes and shall not be so used".¹ Japan has steadily expanded these operations over the past two decades despite the fact that they "represent an act contrary to the spirit of the moratorium on commercial whaling and to the will of the Commission."² Japan's "scientific" whaling programs have also been widely criticized by leading scientific experts worldwide.

In past years, the United States government has repeatedly stated its opposition to lethal "scientific" whaling but has not pursued related negotiations with Japan and other whaling countries outside the narrow rubric of the IWC. Instead, the United States has promoted an effort to negotiate with Japan within the IWC. These negotiations have now broken down, largely due to the intransigence of Japan Fisheries Agency representatives in the negotiations. This provides fresh evidence that higher level engagement is needed.

As the 61st annual meeting of the Commission convenes this month in Madeira, Portugal, governments worldwide look to the United States for leadership. We note the strong leadership of the US Government over the more than 20 years since adoption of the commercial whaling moratorium, highlighting the need to stop all commercial whaling and to halt international trade in whale meat. We also welcome the initial efforts undertaken by your administration to clarify and strengthen the United States position at the IWC and to advance the conservation and protection of whales and appreciate the bold steps you have taken to reintegrate science into government policy and decision making, across departments and agencies.

To further that effort, ending Japan's "scientific" whaling is essential. Therefore, we respectfully urge you to implement a strategy of sustained, high-level diplomatic action outside the IWC and on issues unrelated to whaling to engage, encourage and enlist the Government of Japan in ending the outmoded, unnecessary and controversial practice of "scientific" whaling. Such a strategy would dramatically improve prospects for the survival of our planet's great whales and international efforts to conserve and protect them. We stand ready to work with your administration as appropriate to advance these important objectives.

¹ IWC2003-2. Resolution on Whaling under Special Permit

² Ibid.

Respectfully,



Kathy Zagzebski
President
American Cetacean Society



Cathy Liss
President
Animal Welfare Institute



William Rossiter
President
Cetacean Society International



Francine Cousteau
President
The Cousteau Society



Rodger Schlickeisen
President and CEO
Defenders of Wildlife

Ann Moss
President
Dolphin Connection



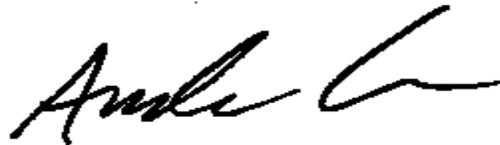
David Phillips
Executive Director, Earth Island Institute
Director, International Marine Mammal Project



Allan Thornton
President
Environmental Investigation Agency



Phil Radford
Executive Director
Greenpeace USA



Andrew Rowan, Ph.D
Chief International Officer
Humane Society International



Wayne Pacelle
President & CEO
The Humane Society of the United States



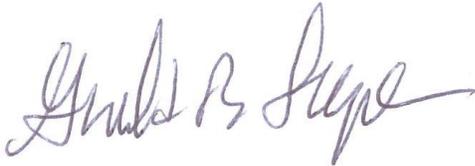
Fred O'Regan
President
International Fund for Animal Welfare



Deborah A. Adams
President
LegaSeas International



Frances Beinecke
President
Natural Resources Defense Council



Gerald Leape
Senior Officer
Pew Environment Group



Chris Butler-Stroud
Chief Executive Officer
Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society



Jeff Pantukhoff
President and Founder
The Whaleman Foundation



Major General Peter Davies, CB CCMI, FCIPD, FRSA
Director General
World Society for the Protection of Animals

cc:

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, United States Department of State
The Honorable Gary Locke, Secretary, United States Department of Commerce