

# NGO STATEMENT TO THE 60<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

SANTIAGO, CHILE

25 JUNE 2008

Thank-you Mr. Chairman. My name is Wakao Hanaoka. I work for Greenpeace in Japan. I am speaking today with Mona George-Dill, President of the Dominica NGO Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness on behalf of the NGOs listed on the written statement.

In his message to the world for the soon to be held G8 Summit in Toyako Japan, Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda writes, "I look forward to welcoming world leaders to Toyako, an area rich in natural beauty, and having fruitful discussions that pave the way to a better world." (<http://www.g8summit.go.jp/eng/info/index.html>)

We agree with the Prime Minister. Fruitful discussions that pave the way to a better world should happen at the G8 Summit. They should also happen here at this 60<sup>th</sup> meeting of the International Whaling Commission. Life is said to begin at 60. What better way to take the conservation of cetaceans into the 21<sup>st</sup> century than by giving this convention a facelift

The state of our world and our oceans in 2008 is very different from the situation when this convention was negotiated in the 1940s. Human activities have had a profound impact on our planet. Beneath the waves, the combined impacts of overfishing, pollution and climate change are altering habitats and changing ecosystems.

Looking back over the past 60 years, we would do well to remember how much of a disaster the 20th century was for whales. The blue whale, humpback, fin, and sei were all over hunted –the blue to the brink of extinction - while the whaling industry operating under IWC management, demonstrated over and over again the unsustainability and impossibility of regulating of commercial whaling.

The moratorium has brought relief from these serial management failures.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century must demonstrate humankind's ability to learn from our mistakes and turn the tide from overexploitation, to conservation and protection.

Already, there is broad recognition that the 21<sup>st</sup> century definition of 'sustainable use' when it comes to whales, means whale watching, not commercial hunting. Now is the time for this body to endorse that view and devote its considerable political and scientific resources to safeguarding and ensuring the recovery of whale populations everywhere, beginning with the most endangered.

To do this, the Convention must be modernised. It should develop a plan to ensure the

conservation of whales that includes addressing current and future threats like climate change. It must recognise that so-called 'research' whaling is untenable. You don't need to kill whales to study them, so the so-called 'scientific loophole' in the Convention needs to be removed. And the Convention must be updated so that it accords with the accepted principles of international environmental and marine law, including transparency, accountability and precaution.

In 1972 and then again in 1974, a Commissioner addressing this plenary stated,

"This Commission will be known to history as a small body of men who failed to act responsibly in terms of their very large commitment to the world, and who protected the interests of the few whalers and not the future of thousands of whales."

All parties to this Convention need to take action this week towards turning that tide, so that in 2068, if perhaps one of our children is a Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission, it will be possible for him or her to address this body saying:

"This Commission will be known to history as a body which rose to the occasion and became an instrument of conservation which brought back whale species from the brink of extinction and led the way for the protection of marine biodiversity so that we can be proud of the clean, healthy and vital oceans that we have today."

We look forward to a modernized IWC protecting all cetaceans in all oceans for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We hope that everyone gathered at this IWC meeting thinks of all those who have stood up for transparency and accountability, and the importance of freedom of expression.

We thank the Commission for this opportunity to speak today.

Thank-you Mr. Chairman.