

## Marine Scientists Petition to the IWC

We the undersigned marine scientists respectfully call on the member nations of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) not to undermine the conservation achievements of the last few decades by again endorsing commercial whaling at their next meeting.

We are aware that at its 62<sup>nd</sup> meeting in Agadir, Morocco, June 21<sup>st</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup>, the IWC will consider a proposal to grant catch limits to the three member nations of the IWC – Japan, Norway and Iceland - that continue to take whales for commercial gain, using well-known loopholes in the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The proposal will even permit whaling in a Marine Protected Area (“sanctuary” in the terminology of the IWC) created specifically to protect whales in large parts of their ranges. We believe that to do so would be highly inappropriate and untimely and would again risk the future of the whales.

Whilst aware that some whale populations are showing signs of increase in the absence of whaling pressure, partly as a successful result of the global “moratorium” on commercial whaling adopted in 1982, and partly from application of the management procedures agreed in 1975, such increases are not a sufficient rationale to justify the IWC endorsing commercial catches. There is no evidence that any of the few populations and species known to be increasing have reached, or are anywhere near, the levels that might justify non-zero catch limits under the IWC’s existing management and conservation policies and procedures. Furthermore, whales inhabit marine ecosystems that are now increasingly impacted by human activities ranging from oil spills to the effects of persistent pollutants, climate change and increased ship traffic and other hazards; these provide further rationale for providing these remarkable animals of the global commons with the highest possible levels of protection, including protecting them from commercial takes.

The lessons of the past show that commercial whaling has always been intractable to sustainable management, and we see no changes in the attitudes of the industry which continues to favour extracting monetary value from the whales as fast as possible and, in the process, evading and obstructing efforts to ensure full compliance with international regulations and transparent supervision. The long-lived and slow-breeding whales are also difficult and expensive to monitor adequately. We are also growing increasingly aware of the complexity of their population structures, behaviour and societies.

Given the risks involved and that commercial whaling meets no essential human need, we call on all the IWC governments to abandon experiments in the lethal use of whales and instead refocus their efforts on the conservation of whale populations, on understanding their roles in the marine ecosystems of which they are important parts, and promoting, where appropriate, responsible non-lethal uses of them such as whale-watching.

16<sup>th</sup> June 2010

### Signatories:

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*This document has been signed by marine experts (scientists and \*professionals in other relevant disciplines) in their personal capacity; where an affiliation is given this does not necessarily imply the support of the named institution or country.*

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