

STATEMENT by MAMADOU DIALLO, WWF-WAMER

On behalf of the undersigned NGOs

**60TH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION
SANTIAGO, CHILE, JUNE 2008**

I am Dr Mamadou Diallo, with WWF's West Africa Marine Ecoregion Programme. I am speaking today on behalf of the WWF network in more than 100 countries, and a long list of other NGOs present here at the IWC.

Today, populations of nearly all the great whales are at depressed levels, a legacy of unsustainable whaling during the last two centuries.

The world sees the IWC as responsible for the world's whales—and it must be seen to fulfill that obligation. We thus support the inclusion of the full range of threats to whales on the agenda of the IWC and the ongoing and future work of the Conservation and Scientific Committees. The IWC must take action to address significant threats facing cetaceans globally, such as climate change, bycatch, ship strikes, oil and gas development, and habitat degradation.

CLIMATE CHANGE

There is now unequivocal evidence that climate change is happening, that it is due to human activities, and that it will particularly impact the Southern Ocean. One of the species that will be most affected by climate change is the Antarctic minke whale, currently taken in large numbers under special permit. We are pleased that climate change is firmly on the IWC agenda, and that the Scientific Committee's proposed workshop on climate change is going forward. We urge governments to reduce emissions, and factor climate change into all management and conservation activities.

NEEDLESS LETHAL RESEARCH

Although the ICRW allows governments to issue their own lethal research permits, it was written more than 60 years ago, at a time when no practical alternatives existed. Today, modern scientific non-lethal techniques provide the data required for whale management more efficiently and accurately than lethal sampling. We call for an end to the abuses of the special whaling permit provision of the ICRW.

SANCTUARY FOR WHALES

We urge the IWC to respect the wishes of range states and support the establishment of additional IWC sanctuaries for whales. We strongly support the efforts of range countries to establish a sanctuary in the South Atlantic, a region in which whale-watching has been steadily increasing, providing ecotourism income, benefits for local communities, and research opportunities. We also urge an end to whaling in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

WHALES and FISHERIES

The argument that great whales are behind declining fish stocks is completely without scientific foundation. It is not the whales, but rather over-fishing and excess fishing capacity that are responsible for diminishing supplies of fish in developing countries. Blaming whales serves to harm developing nations by distracting any debate on the real causes of the declines of their fisheries. We urge contracting governments to counter any unfounded claims that food security is threatened by whales—and to responsibly address over-fishing and excess fishing capacity.

WHALE MEAT TRADE

We strongly support effective enforcement and implementation of CITES, including the CITES Appendix I listings of great whales. We are very concerned by the recent export of whale meat from Norway and Iceland to Japan. This shipment undermines the effectiveness of both CITES and the IWC. We believe that the collaborative, consensus spirit of discussion that the IWC is trying to foster is undermined by this trade. We urge all IWC contracting governments to withdraw their CITES reservations to the great whales.

FUTURE OF THE IWC

We support efforts to reform the IWC, and to build a future that provides greater benefits for whale conservation. As governments debate various issues in a potential “package” for the IWC, we urge you to formally address directed take of small cetaceans, climate change, pollution, gear entanglement and bycatch, and ship strikes. For the IWC to remain relevant over the long term it must include in its scope all human activities which threaten cetaceans.

The IWC must fully enable civil society engagement. The rules of the IWC are not in line with modern multilateral agreements. We are disturbed at the suggestion that civil society should be specifically excluded from a working group on the future of the IWC.

The IWC is at a crossroads—the world is watching, and both the future of the IWC and the world’s cetaceans are in the balance.

Thank you very much.