

June 1, 2010

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



Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the undersigned member organizations of the Whales Need US (WNUS) coalition representing over 17 million citizens, we write to strongly object to the recently published International Whaling Commission (IWC) document (IWC/62/7) "Proposed Consensus Decision to Improve the Conservation of Whales from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission." This Proposed Decision as drafted would, if implemented, effectively suspend the commercial whaling moratorium for ten years and set back whale conservation efforts for at least a generation. The moratorium, which then-President Reagan and the United States actively supported, is the single most important conservation measure ever implemented for cetaceans and has, over the past twenty-five years, saved hundreds of thousands of whales. The Proposed Decision would erase this progress by legitimizing commercial whaling, allowing whaling to continue in an internationally recognized marine sanctuary, failing to phase-out commercial whaling, and rewarding decades of intransigence by Japan, Iceland and Norway, the last three countries still engaged in cruel and outmoded commercial whaling.

The Proposed Decision, as written is also squarely inconsistent with long-standing U.S. policies on whaling, whale conservation, and the IWC. These policies, recently reaffirmed by Nancy Sutley, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, include support for the whaling moratorium; decision-making based on sound science; opposition to so-called scientific whaling; recognition that abuse of Article V and Article VIII of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) undermines the IWC; and a commitment to significantly improving the conservation status of whales.

Members of the WNUS coalition have repeatedly advised the U.S. delegation to the IWC of our concerns about the Proposed Decision and the closed-door process that led to it, and we have provided input, both in writing and verbally, about what is essential to any agreement. To date, however, few of our suggestions have been endorsed by the U.S. and little information has been provided to us about the nature or content of these closed-door negotiations – an outcome inconsistent with an open, transparent, and accountable government. Moreover, though we were recently advised that the U.S. does not support the Proposed Decision as worded, we know that the members of the U.S. delegation to the IWC and other government officials continue to pressure foreign governments to accept a deal without the contents of that deal being fully delineated, available to the public, or subject to scientific scrutiny.

Mr. President, the process to negotiate the Proposed Decision was initiated by the previous administration. We respectfully urge you now to direct the U.S. Departments of State and Commerce to vigorously and actively oppose the Proposed Decision and to persuade other Contracting Parties to the IWC to not support any decision unless significant changes are made that include an immediate end to abuses of the ICRW, a ban on international trade in whale products, and the development of a timetable providing an expeditious end to all whaling, including scientific whaling, except that conducted for legitimate subsistence purposes.

We urge you to act immediately to ensure the kind of U.S. leadership that has proven essential to providing lasting protection for our planet's great whales.

Respectfully yours,



Cheryl McCormick
Executive Director
American Cetacean Society



Ed Sayres
President
The American Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Animals



Cathy Liss
President
Animal Welfare Institute



William Rossiter
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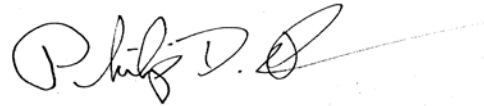
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cc: Ambassador Cristian Maquieira, Chairman, International Whaling Commission
Mr. Anthony Liverpool, Vice-Chairman, International Whaling Commission
Ms. Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
Secretary Hilary Clinton, U.S. Department of State
Secretary Gary Locke, U.S. Department of Commerce
Secretary Ken Salazar, U.S. Department of the Interior
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Select Commissioners to the International Whaling Commission