

Japan Updates Antarctica Whaling Policy in Defiance of the International Court of Justice ruling.

Latin American, Caribbean and International NGOs to Call on their Governments to Stop Japanese whale slaughter in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary

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In contravention with the March 2014 International Court of Justice ruling against Japan and its whaling activities in the Antarctica Whale Sanctuary and the ICJ order for that country to immediately withdraw its whaling fleet from the Sanctuary, Japan has put in motion a plan to continue slaughtering whales in this pristine zone through its so-called "scientific" whaling programs, recognized for years as a cover up for commercial whaling operations and a push towards the abolition of the Antarctica Sanctuary. ECCEAS is one of the Non Governmental Organizations from Latin America, the Caribbean and international institutions urging their governments to take immediate action to stop Japan moving back into Antarctica and in doing so ensure the survival of this last great polar wilderness, its ecosystem and the whales.

In January this year, 47 civil society organizations from 15 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean together with international institutions called on the Latin American countries - the Buenos Aires Group (BAG) and national governments, Party to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), to take urgent action to publicly reject Japan's plan to continue slaughtering whales on a commercial-scale in the Southern Ocean whale sanctuary allegedly for "scientific" purposes.



In Antarctica and global seas the world's whale species have been exploited to a point that despite the moratorium and the end of commercial whaling, whale stocks remain a small fraction of their pre-whaling levels

The call for urgent action by NGOs targets last November's presentation by Japan of an updated "scientific" whaling program in Antarctica designated as NEWREP-A. NEWREP-A foresees an annual capture of over 300 Minke whales from December 2015 through a period of 12 years by Japan. The program is Japan's answer to the landmark ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), on March 31, 2014, in which Japan's lethal whaling in Antarctica for alleged "scientific" research purposes was illegal, violated the global moratorium on commercial whaling and the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.

The delivery of the letter to the Buenos Aires Group of governments in Latin America whose territories are particularly affected, coincides with the recent departure of the Japanese whaling fleet to Antarctica to conduct a "census" of whales there by non-lethal methods, a move that is part of the Nippon strategy to gain support for its project, which envisages the continued

slaughter of hundreds of whales annually in the name of science in Antarctica's Whale Sanctuary, from December 2015.

A major concern for NGOs is that Japan's NEWREP-A whaling plan in Antarctica would be a self assigned annual quota, 333 Antarctic Minke Whales for a duration of twelve years is 3,300% higher than the quota suggested by the only Japanese scientific expert participating in the International Court of Justice proceedings in March 2014: the new quota would exceed by 32% the number of Minke whales slaughtered by Japan during its final "scientific" whaling program JARPA II in Antarctica that was condemned as illegal by the ICJ last March.

If the ICJ ruling underlines the commercial scale of Japanese whaling operations in Antarctica NGO study shows that the NEWREP-A self assigned whaling quota propose a minimal decrease of 7.7% in illegal catches

The NGO letter identifies other NEWREP-A objectives, such as the elimination of the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, created in 1994 by the Parties of the International Whaling Commission and where Japan alone voted against the Resolution.

NGOs also point out that the Japanese NEWREP-A data would be based on lethal killing method, targeting hundreds of whales each year. Whale scientists use non-lethal methods for sampling and research needs and lethal takes reveal the underlying objective of Japan's proposed whaling program and its commercial intent; a program far removed from "science" which is designed to unilaterally impose Japanese pro whaling policies in the Southern Hemisphere.

NGOs remind governments that one of the reasons for the ICJ judgment, condemning JARPA II's illegal whaling program, was that its implementation was based on "logistical and political objectives, rather than scientific."

Additionally government attention is drawn to the extent of Japanese whaling operations, that these are in contravention with the ICJ ruling and that Japan's plan is to continue operations in Antarctica which would expand to the Southwest Atlantic and South-East Pacific. The zones coincide with the Buenos Aires Group's Air Sea Rescue Operational Area whose responsibility is to respond to emergencies. They are on call for accidents or incidents generated, for example, by the dangerously anachronistic Japanese whaling fleet.

The NGO letter underlines how the Japanese government seeks to implement the new whaling program in Antarctica, *without* the requisite scrutiny and mandatory scientific review process undertaken by the recognized qualified body of scientists: the IWC's Scientific Committee. When finalized the Review must be approved by each IWC Party.

Finally NGOs emphasize that NEWREP-A contains the same elements as the illegal whaling program JARPA II: it uses the same anachronistic Japanese whaling fleet, which constitutes a danger to the delicate Antarctic marine ecosystem. The program would be implemented by the Institute for Cetacean Research or ICR, the previous developers of JARPA I and JARPA II. The program would continue to commercialize whale meat and by-products.

The goal is clearly political and includes the elimination of the global moratorium on commercial whaling and the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, it targets the capture of a far larger number of whales than during the illegal JARPA II program.

The NGOs called upon the Buenos Aires Group and other national governments to take urgent action to prevent the implementation of NEWREP-A, lodging a formal rejection with the IWC Secretariat as to the irregularity of the review process and refuse the Japanese plan for a revamped whaling program in the Antarctica Sanctuary condemned by the highest legal instance, the International Court of Justice.

Note:

The NGOs are represented by Elsa Cabrera, Executive Director of the Cetacean Conservation Center in Chile – which territory is directly affected, as is that of other major states. Elsa states "we expect that this strong call by civil society organizations – representing the interests of millions of people from Latin America, the Caribbean and beyond – will be promptly attended to by the Buenos Aires Group as the implementation of NEWREP-A constitutes a serious threat to governance of a key area in our region and for Antarctica. NEWREP-A not only ignores the landmark ruling of the International Court of Justice, which requires the Japanese government to halt issuance of any new permits for scientific whaling, it also constitutes a serious breach of current IWC governance, in particular the 5IWC) schedule amendments referring to the moratorium on commercial whaling and the no whaling zone that is the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary".

Source: Center for Cetacean Conservation, Santiago, Chile
(Text review Eng. ECCEA)

Photos

http://www.coolantarctica.com/gallery2/scenic/scenic_pictures0001.html



http://www.coolantarctica.com/gallery/whales_whaling/0060.htm