

OPEN LETTER FROM PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYMPOSIUM ON
OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE “BLUE” TOURISM
AND COMBATTING THE THREATS TO MARINE MAMMALS IN THE
CARIBBEAN,

SAINTE-LUCE, MARTINIQUE, 18-21 FEBRUARY 2010

to

Commissioners, Delegates, and Non-Governmental Organisation representatives
attending the International Whaling Commission's Small Working Group meeting, St
Pete's Beach, Florida (USA),
2-4 March 2010.

The 'blue' tourism symposium in Martinique, one of the first such gatherings to be held in celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity, welcomed information from participants from the Caribbean, the Americas, the Pacific Islands and the Indian Ocean about the increasing benefits that well-regulated whale-watching is delivering for the tourist industry in their countries and regions.

The symposium also learned that the IWC will have before it for consideration in Florida a proposal from a working group of some of its members that may include recommendations endorsing future whaling operations in the North Pacific, North Atlantic and in the IWC's Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, in the context of seeking to reform and modernize the IWC for the future.

Symposium participants call on IWC delegates to reject any proposals that would retard the laudable progress that our international community has made in protecting whales and in developing precautionary approaches to management, seeking to restore and maintain the integrity and biodiversity of ocean ecosystems that continue to provide economic and social benefits to the people of our global neighbourhood, particularly small and vulnerable states in the Caribbean and Pacific.

Whales which survived the massacre of their hunting in past centuries have become icons of conservation, ambassadors for the seas and their threatened biodiversity, and harbingers of much better times for coastal communities worldwide, several of which have been raised from poverty or experienced transitions from scarcity to plenty thanks to the non-lethal and truly sustainable use of cetaceans through ecotourism.

The 'blue' tourism symposium, recalling that the international community has not only failed to meet its obligation to significantly reverse the decline in biodiversity globally but that this decline is accelerating, urges all IWC members to agree that this

is not the time for the IWC to dismantle its earlier conservation successes, but rather to seek ways to ensure that they are fully respected and implemented.

As a priority, we urge all of you, the delegates at the Florida meeting, first to focus on ways and means to phase out whaling in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary completely within the shortest possible time. Should IWC members establish a clear timetable for a permanent end to all whaling in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, we offer you our full public support and commendation.