



## **OPENING STATEMENT TO THE 64<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION**

*Green Vegans is pleased to participate as a non-governmental observer to the 64<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the IWC and welcomes this opportunity to present our statement on commercial whaling, scientific whaling and Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. Green Vegans would like to thank Panama for hosting this meeting and welcoming us to Panama City.*

Green Vegans / The New Human Ecology is an environmental and species' rights organization. We advocate and conduct campaigns to achieve Seven Results. Together, they create The New Human Ecology we seek. Green Vegans opposes all whaling.

Cetaceans are highly evolved, sentient individuals who have an acute awareness of their surroundings and life. Whales experience fear and pain like humans. Green Vegans considers all whaling to be inherently cruel, inhumane and therefore unacceptable. Unhealthy ecosystems also cause harm, suffering, and death. Therefore, to fulfill its mandate, the IWC must act robustly to protect cetaceans and their ecosystems. The IWC must reorient its biologically non-adaptive worldview that includes whaling.

Since the 1986 moratorium commenced, we are realizing the severity of the threats that whale populations are facing: atmospheric ozone depletion and increasing UV radiation; increasing entanglement in fishing gear and over-fishing of their prey species; persistent toxic accumulation from marine pollution; the loss of marine phytoplankton at a rate of one percent per year; chronic anthropogenic noise pollution; habitat loss; ocean acidification and its global ripple effects through food webs; the loss of sea ice that affects the timing of prey species; increased shipping and boat collisions; changes in nutrient-bearing ocean currents; the unsustainable and unconscionable increase in our population to seven billion and rapidly rising (projected to become nine billion in 38 years); human economic systems that act as if disconnected from the ecosystems upon which they depend; and the unpredictability of global climate changes on marine ecosystems. Alone and cumulatively, these threaten the viability of cetaceans as they do all species.

The IWC needs to recognize that, for thousands of years, our ancestors have waged inhumane and unjust wars upon cetaceans and their indigenous cultures that pre-date our own. The war continues today. Whaling is an arcane and indefensible human behavior. Yet, we continue to kill whales in the most horrible ways imaginable. We render their social communities into shreds. Ending the torment of cetaceans is the necessary mandate of the IWC. If the IWC is to survive, it needs to act biocentrically and take the course of modernization.

Therefore, Green Vegans / The New Human Ecology (GV):

Supports the establishment of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary and all resolutions which serve to increase protections afforded to cetaceans.

Conditionally supports the Resolution on the Importance of Continued Scientific Research with regard to the Impact of the degradation of the marine environment on the Health of Cetaceans and related Human Health Effects.

Opposes Japan's lethal research programs, believing that all research objectives can be accomplished without killing whales. Japan's whaling under special permit is contrary to the spirit and the intention of ICRW Article VIII, both in scale and design.

Opposes the whaling blatantly conducted by Norway and Iceland outside of IWC regulations despite regular requests by the IWC to stop. Norway and Iceland's use of objections under Article V.3 of the ICRW undermines the efficacy of the IWC's management decisions.

Objects to the bundling of Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW) quotas. The joint request by the United States, Russia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines should be separated and reviewed on their own merits. Bundling of ASW proposals sabotages the ability of the IWC to objectively evaluate each single proposal using fundamental IWC criteria and procedures. Bundling is detrimental to the very core of the IWC's purpose.

Asserts that the request by the US on behalf of the Makah Tribe should not be considered until it meets domestic requirements of completing an Environmental Impact Statement. The US is again ignoring previous court rulings. By NMFS' own admission, more information is required regarding Pacific Coast Feeding Group whales. Their studied genetic and behavioral evidence of population substructure indicates that PCFG whales may warrant consideration as a separate management unit (Frasier et al., 2011; Lang et al., 2011). More recently, researchers tracking and sampling gray whales discovered that at least some individuals from the highly endangered western stock migrate across the Pacific and into areas used by ENP gray whales, including the Makah hunting areas.

The US took great pains in 1997 to ensure that the IWC would not reach a definitive ruling whether the Makah Tribe qualified for the subsistence exception to the whaling moratorium. Instead, for the precise purpose of avoiding such a ruling, the US submitted a joint quota proposal with Russian authorities and used that quota request, whose subsistence needs had already been recognized by the Commission, to shield the deficient U.S. proposal for the Makah. 15 years later, at IWC 64, the U.S. is again attempting to obtain a quota for the Makah by making a joint request with Russia for the purpose of avoiding a specific determination by the IWC on whether the Makah qualify for the aboriginal subsistence whaling exception to the moratorium. To add insult to injury, they have added St. Vincent and the Grenadines into the joint request and for the reasons stated below should not be granted a quota.

Opposes the attempt by the US to by-pass IWC regulations by proposing domestic legislation for the US to unilaterally grant quotas for bowhead whales should they not obtain IWC approval. The adverse precedential impacts are enormous in relation to the ICRW.

Believes that the request by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) for a humpback whale quota should be denied based on 1) no indigenous need nor truly indigenous population, 2) inadequate or non-existent needs statements 3) non-compliance with IWC regulations. SVG kills pilot whales, and recently, orcas from speedboats almost on a weekly basis. SVG's history of targeting humpback calves and killing cow/calf pairs also needs to be considered. SVG continues to request and receive quotas from the IWC despite their intransigence with regard to IWC regulations.

Opposes the request made on behalf of the Inupiat communities from Alaska for bowhead and gray whales. The quota is excessive to the indigenous population, especially in Barrow.

Historically, far fewer bowhead whales were taken per capita in past decades. The 60 to 70 percent struck and lost rate is unacceptably high, and they refuse to make an effort to at least estimate time to death from a safe distance. They have hunted endangered bowhead whales when weather conditions indicated the struck and lost rate would likely be higher. We suspect, but are unable to document, that an unreasonable proportion of edible whale products are shipped to distant cities.

Opposes the request for gray whales and bowhead whales made on behalf of the people living in the Chukotka region of Russia. We recognize the utter failure of the government to create conditions favorable to economic health. The population and economy of the region has declined precipitously since the fall of the Soviet Union. Many Chukotka people suffer economic hardship. This is a social failure that should not be suffered by bowhead and gray whales who suffer the agony of being shot to death by rifles and automatic weapons for hours on end. We remember when gray whales near Chukotka were once hunted by commercial whaling ships and the whales fed to commercial mink farms. The extraordinary cruelty of the Chukotkan hunt is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Believes the request by Greenland should be denied based on the commercial aspect of the hunt and the inclusion of non-indigenous population in their needs statement. Greenland has failed consistently to comply with IWC Scientific Committee regulations on reporting the technical data re: its whale hunts. Greenland has not included the large amount of small cetaceans killed that make up part of the indigenous diet for the quota they request. If the commercial sale of whale products to tourists in restaurants obtained under an ASW quota is “consistent with aboriginal subsistence whaling”, as the US position states, then it is clear that the US is part of the complete dysfunction of the IWC to the detriment of all cetaceans.