

## IWC Chair and Vice-Chair Offer New Way to Conserve Whales and Manage Whaling

22 April 2010

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the International Whaling Commission today unveiled a draft proposal to bring all whaling operations under full IWC control and to strengthen further and focus the work of the IWC on conservation issues. The 88 member governments of the IWC will have 60 days to review the plan before discussing it at their annual meeting in June where it could be changed or adopted.

If adopted, the proposal ([see here](#)) for a 10-year peace plan keeps the moratorium on commercial whaling. Importantly, the three countries that at present set their own catch limits (Japan, Norway, Iceland) will have agreed to IWC-set sustainable catch limits that are substantially below present levels as well as to a rigorous oversight and enforcement arrangement. As proposed, several thousand less whales will be caught over the ten-year period than would have occurred if the present situation remained.

“If an agreement is reached this represents a great step forward in terms of the conservation of whales and the management of whaling. We are not there yet and much remains to be done but we truly wish this to be a *consensus* decision. It will be a major achievement if, despite some fundamental differences of views on whaling, our member countries can put these differences aside for a period to focus on ensuring the world has healthy whale stocks,” said Cristian Maquieira, Chair of the International Whaling Commission and. “For the first time since the adoption of the commercial whaling moratorium, we will have strict, enforceable limits on all whaling operations. As a result, several thousand less whales will be killed over the period of the agreement. In addition, no other IWC countries will be permitted to start hunting whales during the period”.

“This proposal represents an historic step, a paradigm shift in how the Commission would operate,” said IWC Vice-Chair Anthony Liverpool. “Rather than the mistrust and confrontation that have led to little progress, we now have the opportunity to reconcile our differences, and so strengthen actions related to our shared goal of maintaining healthy whale populations and recovering depleted stocks. This consensus decision would represent a delicate balance of accommodations by all IWC members and establish a 10-year period of stability during which we can work to resolve our major long-term issues. We could put the focus where it belongs – on improving the conservation of whales and the management whaling.”

Fundamental conservation and management components of this consensus decision are to:

- retain the moratorium on commercial whaling;
- suspend immediately for the ten-year period, unilaterally-determined whaling under special permit, objections, and reservations;
- bring all whaling authorised by member governments under the control of the IWC;

- limit whaling to those members who currently take whales;
- ensure that no new non-indigenous whaling takes place on whale species or populations not currently hunted;
- establish caps for the next ten years that are significantly less than current catches and within sustainable levels, determined using the best available scientific advice;
- introduce modern, effective IWC monitoring, surveillance and control measures for whaling operations;
- create a South Atlantic Sanctuary;
- recognise the non-lethal value and uses of whales, such as whalewatching, as a management option for coastal states and address related scientific, conservation and management issues of such uses;
- provide a mechanism for enterprise and capacity building for developing countries;
- focus on the recovery of depleted whale stocks and take actions on key conservation issues, including bycatch, climate change and other environmental threats;
- set a decisive direction to the future work of the IWC including measures to reform the governance of the Commission; and
- establish a timetable and mechanism for addressing the fundamental differences of view amongst member governments in order to provide for the effective functioning of the Commission over the longer term.