

# ECO

International Whaling Commission Annual Meeting

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## Has Japan "Bought" A Majority?

For the past several years Japan has openly targeted small, developing countries in what it has called a global "vote consolidation" program. This year's 56th Annual meeting will reveal just how close Japan is to controlling the IWC. If they succeed, holding on to the moratorium on commercial killing of whales will be nearly impossible.

This year, it will

take

a scorecard to figure

who's in and who's out. Much depends on which nations have joined, attend, and which have paid their IWC dues to maintain their voting rights. But it is clear that Japan officials have been busy, and recognize how close they are.

In a recent paper prepared by a special working group of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party,

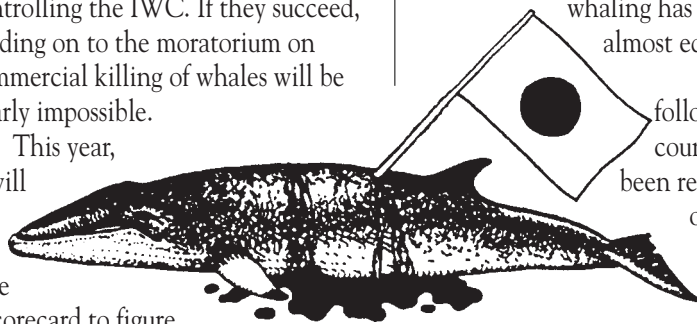
officials stated: "As a result of efforts of the Japanese government and industry, the balance of power within the IWC between the countries supporting sustainable use of whales and those opposing any type of

whaling has become almost equal."

The following 18 countries have been recruited over the years

largely through

Japan's development assistance and can be expected to support Japanese pro-whaling positions: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire (new member), Dominica, Gabon, Grenada, Guinea, Mauritania (new member), Mongolia, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, and Tuvalu.



Belize, Dominica, Palau, Solomon Islands and St. Vincent may not be current in their payment of dues and therefore may not be able to vote.

Two additional new members, Belgium and Hungary, are expected to be pro-conservation votes.

Rumors still abound about possible new members such as the Czech Republic, Greece, Kiribati, Poland, Slovakia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu.

## Post-Ban Whaling

The number of whales killed by Japan, Norway and Iceland since the IWC moratorium took effect in 1986 is 25,239. Most of these have been killed in direct contravention to Resolutions passed by the IWC. Japan also continues the kill of hundreds of whales each year in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary, an internationally recognized sanctuary in the waters around Antarctica, established by the IWC in 1992.

## Iceland Cuts Whale Kill

In a reversal of plans to expand the numbers and species of whales killed for "science", Icelandic officials announced a more limited proposed kill of 25 minke whales this year.

Iceland rejoined the IWC in 2002 during a special intersessional meeting, but several nations objected to Iceland's signing onto the IWC treaty while filing an objection to the IWC's moratorium on commercial whaling.

Last year in Berlin, Iceland proposed a controversial scientific whaling scheme, patterned after the expanding lethal whale science conducted by Japan for many years. Most IWC nations believe that little real science is being produced by whaling. Instead, the whaling products wind up on supermarket shelves. Iceland originally proposed killing 100 sei, 200 fin, and 200 minke whales over the course of a

two-year research period.

Also like the Japanese whaling industry, the Icelandic killing machine will be heavily subsidized by the government.

Finding little support, Iceland surprised IWC nations by announcing, shortly after the end of the Berlin meeting, that they would go research whaling without IWC support, and promptly went to sea searching for minke whales. But instead of hundreds of whales, the *(concluded on page 4)*

## President of Brazil Supports Whale Sanctuary

In a new development, the President of Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has written a letter to other heads of states in favor of establishing a Whale Sanctuary in the South Atlantic.

This represents a stunning increase in international attention for the sanctuary, which has failed to garner the necessary 3/4 vote by the IWC. It also represents the first time a head of state has written to other countries promoting the non-lethal use of whale resources.

Brazil has been an important advocate for whales at the IWC and a staunch defender of many species,

including one of the most endangered whale populations on Earth, the southern right whale.

In his letter, President Lula states: "We have to highlight our concern with the undeniable responsibility of humankind towards the conservation of biodiversity as we inherited it, for its intrinsic, cultural, ethical and religious values and also for services which sustain human societies."

"Though respectful of other management options undertaken in other regions of the planet," President Lula continues, "the generation of income and jobs, besides other social

benefits that our people derive from the presence of living whales, demand our utmost effort in ensuring their future existence."

For too long, IWC delegations from pro-whaling nations, often led by ideological fisheries services bureaucrats and other pro-commerce agencies, have blocked efforts by the IWC to give whales adequate protection.

But this new letter from the Brazilian President bypasses lowly special interest bureaucracies in favor of appealing directly to the legitimate heads of state around the world. President Lula is seeking cooperation from the IWC, not another round of negative votes and foot-dragging.

## Makah Gray Whale Hunt Blocked

A US federal court of appeals has again blocked a controversial hunt for gray whales by the coastal Indian tribe of Washington state, the Makah. The court ruled that the US government was required to conduct a full environmental assessment in support of any whale hunt and required a special waiver to the US Marine

decision.

The Makah and the US government have

required for nutritional needs, as required under the IWC provisions. However, the Russian Federation provided five gray whales from their annual quota to the US government and the Makah.

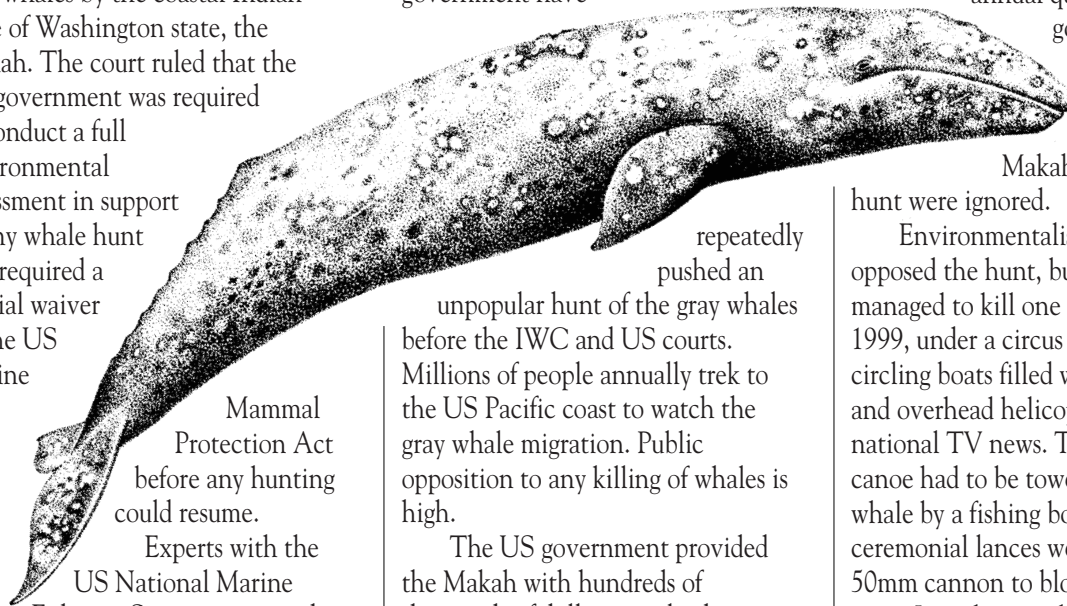
Tribal elders from the

Makah opposing the

hunt were ignored.

Environmentalists strongly opposed the hunt, but the Makah managed to kill one gray whale in 1999, under a circus atmosphere of circling boats filled with protesters and overhead helicopters from national TV news. The indigenous canoe had to be towed out to the whale by a fishing boat, and the ceremonial lances were replaced by a 50mm cannon to blow the whale away. It took several shots for the gray whale to die.

But since 1999, the Makah's efforts have been blocked by court action and by a lack of federal government funding. Even tribal leaders have downplayed the effort, focusing on other tribal business. The new court order will hamstring future hunts.



Mammal Protection Act before any hunting could resume.

Experts with the US National Marine Fisheries Service estimated it would take "several years" for the agency to comply with the new legal

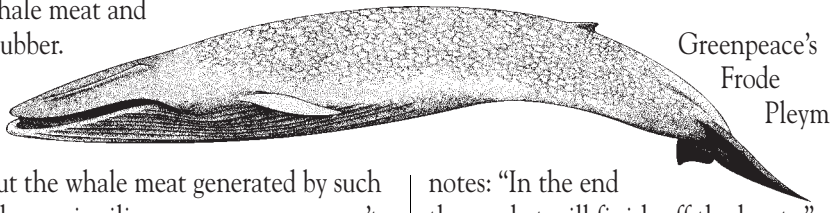
repeatedly pushed an unpopular hunt of the gray whales before the IWC and US courts. Millions of people annually trek to the US Pacific coast to watch the gray whale migration. Public opposition to any killing of whales is high.

The US government provided the Makah with hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies to prepare for hunting of gray whales. Whaling by the tribe had ended in the early 20th century, 70 years before the tribe sought to resurrect its whaling rights, including in a tribal treaty with the US government.

The IWC was asked to support the kill, but no action was taken as to whether the subsistence hunt was

## Growing Stockpiles of Whalemeat

Japan and now Iceland continue to kill whales in the name of science. And Norway's commercial whaling in defiance of the international moratorium continues to pile up whale meat and blubber.



But the whale meat generated by such schemes is piling up; consumers aren't buying.

Japan kills about 700 whales in the Antarctic Ocean (440 minke whales) and the northern Pacific, not to mention many small cetaceans that are killed in waters surrounding Japan. The so-called "scientific" cull generates about 2,000 tons of meat annually for the market. But whale meat consumption in Japan is showing declining trends. Many older Japanese equate whale meat with school lunch programs and poverty following World War II, when protein was at a premium. Others simply don't like the taste.

And Iceland has cut back its planned scientific cull of minke whales to 25 this year, down from 36 minke whales killed last year at the beginning of a new controversial "scientific" whaling enterprise. Like Japan's sham whaling, Iceland's whale meat winds up as commercial fodder, subsidized heavily by the government.

In May, Norway began their 2004 whale hunt for 670 minke whales, which becomes about 1,000 tons of whale meat for consumers. But meat from the 2003 hunt still lies frozen in piles in Norwegian markets. Norway has been unable to get rid of blubber (which Norwegians do not eat) because of high contamination levels of pesticides, heavy metals, and other pollutants. Some markets are offering brochures suggesting recipes for whale meat to hide the taste -

burritos, stroganoff, and hamburgers figure prominently, along with exotic sauces. Japan offers similar recipes for whale soup, sushi, whale fried rice or canned whalemeat sandwiches.

notes: "In the end the market will finish off the hunts."

Health concerns are also a primary danger to consumers. Whales and dolphins feed at the top of the marine food chain, so any pollutants in sea water tend to be magnified and stored in the tissues and blubber of cetaceans. High levels of mercury, heavy metals, PCBs, and other toxins

have been reported in whale and dolphin meat sold to consumers. Norway's government issued a health warning last year for pregnant women to avoid eating minke whalemeat due to high levels of mercury contamination. Research on whalemeat contamination in Japan by the Environmental Investigation Agency and independent scientists show levels of mercury, heavy metals, and PCBs that often exceed Japanese government health standards.

Consumers are not fools. Whale meat is not particularly tasty; it carries high levels of pollutant contamination; and it results in killing the world's remarkable wild cetaceans in a cruel and wasteful manner. The IWC moratorium on commercial whaling, still in effect, should be enforced and honored.

## Whaling Too Cruel to Continue

Animal welfare and environmental groups from 55 countries launched a campaign to end both commercial and scientific whaling in keeping with the IWC moratorium.

Representing the groups, Sir David Attenborough says "there is no humane way to kill a whale at sea." Attenborough quotes Dr. Harry Lillie, a ship's physician aboard a whaling vessel in the 1940's, who noted: "The gunners themselves admit that if whales could scream the industry would stop, for nobody would be able to stand it."

"If we can imagine a horse having two or three explosive spears stuck in its stomach and being made to pull a butcher's truck through the streets of London while it pours blood into the gutter, we shall have an idea of the method of killing," wrote Dr. Lillie.

The coalition has released a report titled "Troubled Waters." More

information is available on the groups' website for the campaign, [www.whalewatch.org](http://www.whalewatch.org).

In addition to stopping the killing of whales, both for commerce and for "science", the coalition also urges the IWC to spend more time investigating the cruelty of whaling practices. The IWC has pursued the issue of "humane killing" of whales for several years, but has made little real progress in preventing pain and suffering to whales. The coalition notes that more than 1,400 whales are scheduled to die this year, despite the moratorium on commercial whaling and universal condemnation of the so-called "scientific" whaling.

Some whales, the report notes, take over an hour to die; the average estimated time for whales to die is more than two minutes of agony.

"On the grounds of animal welfare alone, all whaling operations should be halted," stated the coalition.



## Blasting Whales With Sonar

In a letter to US Secretary of the Navy Gordon England, environmental groups have charged that dozens of whales off the coast of Washington, Puerto Rico, the Canary Islands, Portugal and other locations have beached themselves during Navy maneuvers sometimes hemorrhaging blood through their eyes and ears.

The letter from NRDC, Ocean Futures Society, IFAW, and HSUS called on the Navy to identify low-risk areas for training, establish safety zones around transmit vessels, and reduce the strength of the sonar signals.

A study published in *Nature* last year said it appeared that marine mammals could be killed or harmed by sonar. Scientists have theorized that animals get frightened by the sound and surface too quickly, causing nitrogen in the blood to transform into gas, which can block blood vessels and cause bleeding in vital organs.

Environmentalists suspect the whales which usually inhabit only deep water were driven ashore by the booming sounds.

The letter to the Navy followed an incident July 3 in which roughly 200 melon-headed whales herded together near the coast of Hanalei

Bay in Hawaii. One beached itself and died a few days later.

The Navy had been using mid-frequency sonar in exercises 20 miles from the shore at the time. The Navy agreed to halt the testing during the July 3 herding, but said the whales began gathering a full hour before the sonar was used.

In October, a federal judge scuttled the Navy's plans to experiment with low-frequency sonar throughout the majority of the world's oceans, confining it to areas with few marine mammals and endangered species.

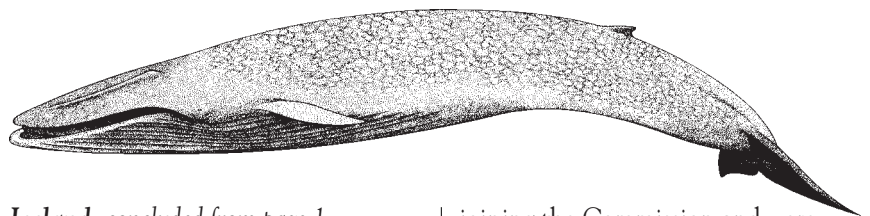
An international coalition of environmental and animal welfare groups have also petitioned the

United Nations to take action to curb ocean noise pollution and research the effects.

The petition was signed by dozens of organizations based in Europe, the US, and Canada. Effects of intense noise on marine mammals include death and serious injury caused by hemorrhages or other tissue trauma; strandings; temporary and permanent hearing loss or impairment; displacement from preferred habitat and disruption of feeding, breeding, nursing, communication, sensing and other behaviors vital to the survival of these species. Similar concerns exist for potential impacts on other marine species, including fish.

The petition notes the growing intensity and scope of noise underwater, caused by use of explosives, oceanographic experiments, geophysical research, underwater construction, ship traffic, intense active sonars and air guns used for seismic surveys for oil and related activities.

The petition urges the UN to take steps to control high intensity noise via the framework of the Law of the Sea Treaty. The petition further encourages the use of alternative technologies and realistic mitigation procedures for reducing the hazards of intense underwater sound.



*Iceland*, concluded from page 1 Icelandic fleet could only kill 36 minke whales in 2003.

Now, Iceland has called for a more "minimalistic" approach to whaling, again for research purposes.

This can't be of much comfort to the Japanese and Norwegian whalers who have drooled over Iceland's re-

joining the Commission and were surely looking for more expansionist plans.

However, the markets for whale meat inside Iceland are small and shrinking, the prospects for export to Japan are not good, and political support for whale killing within the country is shaky.