

Whaling Delegate's Vote at Odds With Public Opinion
Citizens Opposed to Whaling Must Make Their Voices Heard

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS (June 19, 2006): The opinions of many citizens were ignored yesterday at the meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). While most support the protection and conservation of whales, the country's IWC commissioner endorsed a declaration that erroneously blames whales for the human-caused decline in fish populations, criticizes non-governmental organizations for their efforts to protect the world's whale species, and refers to the 1986 moratorium against commercial whaling as "no longer necessary."

The St. Kitts-Nevis declaration was extremely divisive, passing by only a single vote (33-32). Many countries believed it to be illegal because it was not in the form of a resolution. However, the declaration's passage is of no consequence since it is not a legal document, has no binding effect and only represents the opinion of 33 countries. All of the countries voting against the declaration, including Australia, Italy, Monaco, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, disassociated themselves from the declaration following the vote.

"We are disgusted that these governments would vote in favor of a declaration that does not represent the opinions of the majority of these countries' residents," said Susan Millward, a research associate with the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), a US-based group that regularly attends the meeting.

Recent polls conducted by the WWF-International found that 79, 76 and 72 percent of citizens in Antigua and Barbuda, Palau and the Solomon Islands respectively oppose the resumption of commercial whaling. Even the results from the Caribbean Island nations of St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia revealed the majority of citizens oppose the resumption of this practice. Yet representatives of all of these countries voted in favor of the declaration. There are indeed few, if any, countries in the world where the majority of citizens do not reject whaling in favor of the whales. As is clear from the vote on the declaration, 33 of the world's governments do not listen to the will of their people.

"Citizens who care about whales must make their voices heard loud and clear," said AWI Wildlife Biologist D.J. Schubert. "They must tell their elected officials that they support the preservation of these intelligent and sentient animals."

The countries that voted in favor of the St. Kitts-Nevis declaration were: Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark, Dominica, Gabon, Gambia, Grenada, Republic of Guinea, Iceland, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Mali, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mongolia, Morocco, Nauru, Nicaragua, Norway, Republic of Palau, Russian Federation, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Togo, Tuvalu.

The Animal Welfare Institute is one of America's oldest animal advocacy organizations dedicated to reducing the pain and fear inflicted on animals by humans.

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