



Rome, 25 June 2024
Prot. invio n. gm/02/24

Dear Icelandic Government,

As an association of marine professionals, nature enthusiasts and advocates for marine conservation, we are deeply concerned about the reopening of the whale hunting activities in Iceland, both for commercial and non-commercial purposes, as this practice is both highly detrimental for the species and in contrast with the principles for animal welfare.

The respect of whales is not only crucial for the balance of marine ecosystems but also reflects our responsibility to protect and preserve these magnificent creatures.

The decline in whale populations and the negative impact of whaling on marine biodiversity as a whole cannot be ignored. It is a common understanding acknowledging the importance of maintaining a healthy and thriving marine environment, which relies on the presence of whales. By allowing the practice of whaling, we are putting at risk the delicate balance of our oceans and the future of these extraordinary animals.

The majority of countries worldwide have recognized the value of protecting whales and have implemented successful bans on whaling. These nations have witnessed firsthand the positive outcomes, such as increased tourism revenue and the preservation of marine biodiversity.

A noteworthy example is the Cetacean Sanctuary, also known as Pelagos Sanctuary. It was created through an agreement signed by Italy, France, and Monaco in 1999 and recognized as a

Special Protection Area of Mediterranean Interest by the Barcelona Convention countries in 2001. Although it still needs an effective management and monitoring plan, it is already a fundamental step towards cetaceans' protection.

This largely common understanding is testified by the Moratorium issued by the International Whaling Commission (IWC), which came into force in 1986 as a key measure in the protection of whales globally. We would like to underline that the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, which established the Commission, allows countries, in Article VIII, to hunt and kill whales only for scientific research purposes. This article assigns the responsibility for establishing and regulating these catches to individual governments, which must, however, inform the IWC of any whaling activities carried out under special permits. Furthermore, the scientific information produced by these activities must be submitted to the Commission at least once a year.

It is evident that Article VIII does not mention any permits for commercial hunting. Notwithstanding this provision, this year a commercial hunting permit has been granted to one company, Hvalur. In our view, this contravenes the spirit and letter of the Convention.

We are convinced that Iceland can make a significant contribution to the protection of whales by ending hunting for commercial purpose and joining international initiatives to protect these magnificent animals. We hope that Iceland can follow the many international examples of whales' protection initiatives, as the Pelagos Sanctuary in the North-West Mediterranean, the marine protected areas of the Phoenix Islands Protected Area and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, established by Kiribati and the United States respectively. We hope that these examples will become role models able to foster the emergence of many other places aimed at protecting species already in distress and threatened with extinction.

Iceland has the opportunity to join this global movement and become a big player in marine conservation.

We therefore heartily ask the Icelandic government to take immediate action to end whaling and make the protection of whales a matter of priority for your great country. Preserving our marine heritage is not only a responsibility we owe to future generations but also a testament to our commitment to the well-being of our oceans and the incredible creatures that inhabit them.

Together, we can make a difference and ensure a sustainable future for whales and the marine ecosystems they call home.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daniela Addis', is centered on a light blue rectangular background.

Daniela Addis

President of Sea Generation Association/Associazione Generazione Mare

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