

Commissioners
Buenos Aires Group

October 25, 2011

Dear Commissioners,

The undersigned organizations would like to express our deep concern about the recent announcement made by the government of Japan to resume from next December the so called "scientific" whaling in the Southern Ocean – with an increase of 28 million dollars of State funding – as well as the statements made by the Japanese Fisheries Minister, Michiniko Kano, in respect to the "improvement of the security" of the Antarctic whaling fleet.

Since the implementation of the moratorium on commercial whaling, the Japanese government has captured more than eight thousand whales in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. Since the JARPA II program began in 2006, the annual whaling quota increased to almost half of all whales taken under special permits per year¹, reaching levels that are similar to the commercial whaling annual quota for the Antarctic minke whale before the implementation of the moratorium.

Apart from being a cover-up for commercial whaling operations thus violating the moratorium on commercial whaling, the "scientific" whaling program conducted by the Japanese government in Antarctica represents a growing and alarming threat to the governance of the Southern Ocean, the security of human life at sea and protection of the sensitive Antarctic marine ecosystem.

The challenging position of the government of Japan, of sending a patrol ship to protect the whaling crew, seriously threatens the principles established by the Antarctic Treaty as zone of peace free of weapons. This situation is even more worrisome because of the lack of transparency of the Japanese Government regarding the type of boat, defense personnel and instruments that would be used in the protection of the whaling fleet. Additionally, the Japanese government reported it would take "other measures" to deal with the demonstrations at sea, without revealing any information. In this complex context, we believe that the defense of peace and demilitarization of the Antarctic is crucial to ensure the governance of the Southern Ocean.

The continuity of JARPA II - despite repeated calls by the international community to stop it - also constitutes a serious threat to the integrity of the lives of people every time the Japanese government's position increases the possibility of generating violent outbreaks in the Southern Ocean to justify the use of aggressive tactics, such as patrol boats and "other measures" that could lead to the loss of human lives.

Additionally, the delicate Antarctic ecosystem - protected under the Antarctic Treaty System - is once again threatened with the operations of the anachronistic and illegal Japanese whaling fleet. In 2007 the factory ship Nisshin Maru caught fire in Southern Ocean waters. As a result, the ship drifted for thirteen days with over a thousand tons of fuel and chemicals, endangering the crew and threatening one of the largest colonies of Adelie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*).

It is worth noting that since August of this year, measures taken by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) came into place, prohibiting the operation of heavy fuel ships in Antarctic waters, which is the type of fuel used by the Nisshin Maru . However, the Japanese government's announcement does not provide any information about the type of fuel to be used by the vessel during the next "scientific" whaling season.

¹ Of all nations that have conducted whaling operations under special permit.

As civil society organizations committed to the conservation of the marine environment, the effective conservation of cetaceans, defense of all life forms and peace, we see with deep concern the reprehensible conduct of the government of Japan, which both inside and outside the scope of the meeting of the IWC continues to show its unwillingness to improve the functioning of this important international organization. Consequently, and knowing your commitment with the conservation and respect to norms and international cohabitation, we ask the Buenos Aires Group to urgently take diplomatic actions to reject the recent announcements made by the Japanese government and send a clear and strong public sign of opposition to the slaughter of whales and the possible militarization of Antarctica.

Thank you for your kind attention, we look forward to a positive reply to our request.

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