



**GREENPEACE**

## **Defending our oceans**

"Greenpeace is committed to defending the health of the world's oceans and the plants, animals and people that depend upon them."

# Whale Sanctuary under Siege



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Established in 1994, the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary is under siege like never before. This year nearly one thousand whales can expect to find no quarter or refuge in the protected waters around the Antarctic. They will be hunted down and killed in the name of science: they will be measured, weighed, cut up and boxed for market, all too often simply remaining on the freezer shelves because so few people relish the taste of whale meat.

The feeding ground for 80 percent of the world's great whales, the Sanctuary is also the 'killing field' of Kyodo Senpaku, a Japanese company which conducts an annual hunt under a licence misleadingly labelled 'scientific whaling' and issued by the Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ).

After years of failed attempts to regulate the global whaling industry's insatiable appetite and reverse the decline in whale populations, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) banned commercial whaling in 1986. Although as an IWC member Japan originally objected to the moratorium, which meant it would be exempt from its control, it was later persuaded by the US to withdraw the objection. The IWC is the body recognised by the UN as having responsibility for the world's whales.

The moratorium, however, contains a fatal flaw. A flaw that the whalers were quick to exploit and on a scale which all could see was a thin veneer covering business as usual in the Antarctic whale killing fields. A special exemption for 'scientific' culls is included in the IWC's rules. It was argued that information gained from dead whales could generate detailed knowledge needed to establish guidelines for sustainable whaling. Science has moved on. Detailed information can now be gained through non-lethal research. In fact, the IWC's scientists have repeatedly asked for the scientific slaughter to stop, saying the data is not needed.

The hunt, although reduced after 1986, did not stop and the whale products collected as a by-product of 'science' continued to be processed and packaged on board the whaling vessels and then sold in supermarkets and restaurants. Later when IWC voted to designate the Southern Ocean as a Whale Sanctuary by 23 votes to one, Japan

again objected and is the only country in the world which does not recognise the Sanctuary.

After many years of openly promoting a return to commercial whaling and emboldened by nearly 20 years of defiance of global public opinion and conservation efforts, the Japanese delegation to this year's IWC meeting, in Ulsan South Korea, announced a plan to more than double, to 935, its annual catch of Antarctic minke whales, adding 50 each of fin and humpback whales, both of which are officially designated endangered species.

The announcement was met with open hostility; many former whaling countries including the US, the UK, and Australia raised strong objections. Those objections fell on deaf ears.

Japan's whalers are also growing more confident that they may soon be able to dump the pretence of scientific whaling and return to open commercial hunts. While international opinion has not changed, the Fisheries Agency of Japan has for a number of years been seeking to force a vote, at the Commission's annual meeting, to end the moratorium. In what the Agency calls a 'vote consolidation programme', every year an increasing number of nations join to support an immediate resumption of commercial whaling. Some new members of the IWC including Gambia, Mali, Togo, Benin, Gabon, Tuvalu and Nauru, who were recruited by and receive substantial aid from the Fisheries Agency of Japan, are backing the pro-whaling position.

After this year's failed attempt to overturn the moratorium, one member of the Japanese delegation warned: "Some of you seemed glad that some poor sustainable use countries could not attend this year's meeting. However, next year they will all participate. The reversal of history, the turning point is soon to come."

This year Greenpeace will also return to the Southern Ocean to defend the whale sanctuary, to protect as many whales from the harpoon as possible.



Two Greenpeace ships, the Esperanza and the Arctic Sunrise, carrying an international crew, will embark on the difficult task of trying to intercept the whaling fleet in 32 million square kilometres of frigid Antarctic water, an area twice the size of the US: bearing witness on the frontier of environmental destruction and calling on the governments and companies behind whaling to stop.

The trip is the first stage in an ambitious new Greenpeace campaign 'Defending our Oceans'. Over the next year the Esperanza will be Greenpeace's main platform in arguing for a network of marine reserves or parks covering 40% of the world's oceans:

places that will be protected from industrial exploitation and destruction, from industrial fishing and hunting, and places from which our oceans can begin the process of repair and recovery.

Not every one is fortunate enough to be able to crew on a Greenpeace ship, but on this expedition anyone can join the Esperanza on-line and help us bring an end to whaling and to defend the oceans. To become an Ocean Defender and sail with us on our incredible journey go to:

[oceans.greenpeace.org](http://oceans.greenpeace.org)



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Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation, which uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and to force solutions essential to a green and peaceful future

Greenpeace International Ottho Heldringstraat 5, 1066 AZ Amsterdam, Netherlands T+31 20 514 8150 F+31 20 514 8156 [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

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