AN OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN ON "SCIENTIFIC WHALING"

Despite its obligation to comply with a global moratorium on commercial whaling, Japan has killed thousands of whales over the past decade, claiming an exemption for "scientific whaling" under international law. We, the undersigned scientists, believe Japan's whaling program fails to meet minimum standards for credible science. In particular:

- We are concerned that Japan's whaling program is not designed to answer scientific questions relevant to the management of whales; that Japan has refused to make the information it collects available for independent review; and that its scientific questions are too narrow or untestable. Japan has announced it will soon begin killing sei whales, an internationally listed endangered species, ostensibly to determine the whales' diet. Yet Japan has already analyzed the stomach contents of nearly 20,000 sei whales it killed during the past fifty years. There is no reasonable likelihood that Japan will begin learning anything new from this captive sample.

- By continuing to fund and carry out this program, Japan opens itself to serious charges that it is using the pretense of scientific research to evade its commitments to the world community. As scientists, we believe this compromise of scientific independence Japan sells meat from the whales it kills on commercial markets and assigns "scientific whaling" quotas to individual commercial whalers. This commercial mixing creates a creative incentive to kill whales even when no scientific need exists, raising troubling questions about the motives behind Japan's program.

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We, the undersigned, urge Japan's government to suspend its "scientific whaling" program.

-Jared Diamond, Professor, California Institute of Technology (USA); Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology; MacArthur Fellow; Britain's Science Association; Oxford University; Eminent Ecologists Committee; Pulitzer Prize; MacArthur Fellow; Lyndhurst Prize Fellow; UNEP Global 500 Roll of Honour.

-Roger Payne, Senior Scientist, World Wildlife Fund-US; Pew Scholars Award in Environment and Conservation; International Rachel Carson Prize Fund-US; Pew Scholars Award in Environment and Conservation; Presidential Lingkod Bayan Award, National Research Council; founding member of the World Commission on Marine Conservation; Member, National Research Council; Eminent Ecologists Committee; MacArthur Fellow; Board of Governors, Society for Conservation Biology.

-John Terborgh, Professor Emeritus, University of California, Los Angeles; Fellow, Royal Society; Board of Trustees, American Museum of Natural History; Nobel Laureate, Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences; Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences; American Academy of Arts and Sciences; Distinguished Professor, Duke University Center for the Environment; President, Society for Conservation Biology; Member, National Academy of Sciences; Former President, National Academy of Sciences; Fellow, American Academy of Arts and Sciences.