



JOINT STATEMENT ON WHALING AND SAFETY AT SEA

GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, THE NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND AND THE UNITED STATES CALL FOR RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN WHALE SANCTUARY

The Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United States jointly condemn any actions that imperil human life in the Southern Ocean. We are deeply concerned that confrontations in the Southern Ocean will eventually lead to injury or loss of life among both whaling crews and protestors, many of whom are nationals of our countries.

We call on the masters of all vessels involved in these actions in the Southern Ocean to take responsibility for ensuring that safety of human life at sea is their highest priority.

We remain resolute in our opposition to whaling in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary established by the International Whaling Commission and are disappointed at the recent departure of the Japanese whaling fleet for the Southern Ocean.

Our governments respect the right of individuals and groups to protest peacefully, including on the high seas. At the same time, we condemn dangerous or violent activities from all participants. Any unlawful activity will be dealt with in accordance with relevant international and domestic laws.

The Southern Ocean in particular is a remote and unforgiving environment where the risk of adverse incidents is high and the capacity for search and rescue or other assistance is low. Any accident in this region jeopardises not only the safety of whaling and protest vessels and their crews but also anyone who comes to their assistance.

We are deeply concerned that an incident in this remote region could end tragically. The collision between an anti-whaling vessel and a Japanese vessel on 6 January 2010 demonstrated clearly the dangers involved.

Our Governments jointly call upon the masters of all vessels involved to strictly observe international collision avoidance regulations. We also draw their attention to the International Maritime Organization's 17 May 2010 resolution on assuring safety during demonstrations, protests or confrontations on the high seas.

Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United States remain committed to the global moratorium on commercial whaling and meaningful reform of the International Whaling Commission.

11 December 2010