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Joint Statement on Whaling and Safety at Sea from the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States: Call for Responsible Behavior in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary

Media Note

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

December 13, 2011

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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 protestors, many of whom are nationals of our countries, and whaling crews.

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 commercial whaling, including so-called 'scientific' whaling, in particular in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary established by the International Whaling Commission, and are disappointed about the recent departure of the Japanese whaling fleet for the Southern Ocean. In this context we wish to emphasize that lethal techniques are not required in modern whale conservation and management. We will continue to engage on this matter.

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 on either side. We are prepared to deal with any unlawful activity 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 jeopardizes not only the safety of whaling and protest vessels and their crews but also anyone who comes to their assistance.

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, and the International Whaling Commission's 2011 Resolution on Safety at Sea.

Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United States remain committed to improving the conservation status of whales worldwide, maintaining the International Whaling Commission's global moratorium on commercial whaling, and meaningful reform of the International Whaling Commission.

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Institute of Cetacean Research v. Sea Shepherd Conservation Soc.,
No. 12-35266 archived on March 1, 2013

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