

Sign-on Statement

June 2008

We, the undersigned, represent tour companies based in Europe. Each year, we bring many visitors to enjoy the beauty and grandeur of Iceland and, particularly, to experience its rich and varied marine wildlife. Iceland is rightly famous as one of the best places in the world to watch a variety of whales and dolphins, including the majestic blue whale, the largest creature ever to inhabit our planet. Minke whales – often the first to approach the whale watch boats - are particular favourites.

For many of our guests, a whale watch trip is one of the highlights of their holiday. According to information reported to a recent workshop on whale watching held in Iceland in March of this year, an estimated 104,300 tourists went whale watching in Iceland in 2007. This has generated millions of Euros in tourism revenue for the local economy.

We are, therefore, extremely concerned to learn that on May 19th, 2008, the Fisheries Ministry of Iceland issued a new quota for a commercial take of minke whales, and that the hunt started the following day. In addition, the export of some 60 tons of fin whale meat from Iceland to Japan has caused us great disappointment. Many people feel strongly that whale watching is not compatible with whaling and it is likely that they would reconsider visiting Iceland if whaling was once more to be conducted in Icelandic waters.

We therefore urge the Icelandic government to immediately reconsider its whaling plans, as well as its exports of whale products – if not for the sake of the whales that are being targeted, then for Iceland's thriving whale watch industry, and its economy as a whole.

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