

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Japan's Whaling Loses Support from Commercial Fisheries Companies

(May 30, 2007) -- Japan's fourth largest fisheries company, Kyokuyo, has pledged to stop its sale of whale meat in Japan. Its decision follows a campaign led by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), Humane Society International (HSI) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). Kyokuyo is thought to have sold at least 10 million cans of whale meat each year in Japan, plus frozen whale products.

Maruha, Japan's largest seafood company and one of the former owners of Japan's whaling fleet also confirmed this week it is ending its production and sale of whale products throughout Japan following an EIA campaign in 2006.

In April, the coalition of environmental and animal welfare groups called on American company True World Foods, which partnered with Kyokuyo to distribute sushi in the United States, to persuade Kyokuyo to stop selling whale products. According to Kyokuyo, it has ceased production of whale products and is in the process of selling off its remaining stockpile.

Kyokuyo, Nippon Suisan and Maruha were Japan's leading commercial whaling companies during the height of commercial whaling, estimated to have killed nearly half a million whales in the Antarctic and North Pacific between 1929 and 1986 and a further 35,000 whales after the 1986 ban on commercial whaling.

They continued their involvement in whaling until March 2006, when an international campaign directed at Nippon Suisan spurred all three companies to divest their shares in the whaling fleet. Nippon Suisan stated then it would also stop the sale of whale meat.

"The fact that Japan's leading fisheries companies have completely distanced themselves from Japan's 'scientific' whaling demonstrates clearly that there is no future in commercial whaling," said Patricia Forkan, president, Humane Society International. "The current market for whale meat in Japan is an artificial one, supported by government subsidies and distribution of cut-price whale meat to public institutions such as schools and hospitals."

Allan Thornton, president of the Environmental Investigation Agency said: “This is the end of the commercial whaling business in Japan with Kyokuyo and Maruha pulling their sales of millions of cans of whale meat each year. It’s time to silence Japan’s harpoons and work together to conserve whales for future generations.”

The coalition is calling on the leading fisheries companies to promote the conservation of whales by urging the Government of Japan to withdraw imminent plans for the killing of 50 humpback and 50 fin whales in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary. The plans for the expansion of the hunt were drawn up at the time Kyokuyo, Nippon Suisan and Maruha were joint owners of Japan’s whaling fleet.

Patrick Ramage, global whale program manager for IFAW said: “Kyokuyo, Maruha and Nippon Suisan now have the chance to make amends for the half million whales they have killed by encouraging the Government of Japan to abandon plans to kill humpback, fin and minke whales later this year.”

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) is a Washington, DC- and London- based independent, international campaigning organization committed to investigating and exposing environmental crime, and campaigning to protect endangered species and the natural world. On the web at www.eia-international.org.

Humane Society International (HSI) is the international division of The Humane Society of the United States, the nation’s largest animal protection organization. HSI has worked for decades to protect whales. On the web at humanesociety.org.

IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare) was founded in 1969 and works around the globe to protect animals and their habitats while promoting practical solutions for animals and people. On the web at www.stopwhaling.org.

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Report, Photos, Video Available Upon Request

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