



communiqué

No: 62
No.:

DIFFUSION: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
RELEASE: JUNE 26, 1981

CANADA WITHDRAWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING CONVENTION AND COMMISSION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. Mark MacGuigan, and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Roméo LeBlanc, announced today that Canada has deposited a notice of withdrawal from the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling and from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) established thereunder. This notice was transmitted today to the Government of the USA as the depositary government under the Convention.

In making the announcement the Ministers noted that this action follows an intensive review of Canada's whaling policy. The decision to conduct this review was taken prior to the 1980 annual meeting of the IWC in light of the changing composition and operations of the IWC and recent efforts to renegotiate the 1946 Convention.

The major conclusions reached in the course of the review were as follows:

- (1) The 1946 Whaling Convention was intended to "provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry". Canada signed the Convention in 1946, when Canadians were engaged in commercial whaling. Since the Canadian Government banned commercial whaling in 1972, Canada no longer has any direct interest in the whaling industry or in the related activities of the IWC.
- (2) Canadian participation in the IWC has been aimed at ensuring the conservation of whales and the regulation of their harvest on the basis of the best scientific evidence available. This approach has led to considerable improvement in the conservation regime for whale stocks on a world-wide basis.

- (3) Canada should continue to support international cooperation for the conservation of the world's whale stocks. This objective, however, does not require Canadian participation in the IWC as a member state.
- (4) As a responsible coastal state with exclusive sovereign rights over all living resources within its 200-mile zone, Canada should continue to seek the advice of the IWC's Scientific Committee, and to exchange scientific data and analyses with that body, relevant to Canadian management of cetacean stocks in its 200-mile zone. This applies particularly to narwhal and beluga stocks in Canada's northern waters, which are hunted on a subsistence basis by aboriginal peoples under Canadian controls designed to ensure the conservation of the stocks. While the Commission does not regulate these species, Canada has supported international scientific review of all cetaceans.
- (5) Canada should continue to support the idea of an International Cetacean Convention which would supersede the 1946 Convention, taking into account recent developments in the law of the sea and the increased emphasis on conservation since the establishment of the IWC in 1946.

In withdrawing from the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and in future relations with the IWC, the Government of Canada will give effect to the above conclusions. Under the terms of the Convention, Canada's withdrawal will become effective on June 30, 1982. Canadian participation in the July 1981 annual meeting of the IWC will be restricted to observer status.