



PRESS RELEASE

Statement Concerning the Import Ban for Wild Dolphins to Dominican Republic

Bonn, Dec. 10th, 2007; The Year of the Dolphin (YOD) Partners today wish to express their thanks to Dr. Leonel Antonio Fernandez Reyes, President of the Dominican Republic for the decision of his Government to refuse an import permit for dolphins caught in the Taiji drive fishery of Japan.

In early 2007 it came to the attention of the YOD Partners that there was a proposed export of twelve dolphins captured in a drive hunt in Taiji, Japan to the Ocean World theme park in the Dominican Republic for captive display. The Partners, on examining the evidence, agreed that the capture of live dolphins was subsidizing a hunt in which many thousands of other dolphins were being killed inhumanely and unsustainably to be sold as meat for human consumption. Given the adverse impact that the drive fishery has on dolphin populations, as well as global public concerns about the fishery, they resolved to express their concerns to the Government of the Dominican Republic.

The Partners wrote to Dr. Leonel Antonio Fernandez Reyes on the 1st May 2007 to offer their advice. The YOD Partners respectively stated *'we felt the need to share our concerns with you, in the hope that you and your country would be able to contribute to the Year of the Dolphin campaign by sending an unequivocal and strong signal to the world'*.

The YOD partners believe that an important step has been taken for cetacean conservation and wish to publicly commend the stance of the Government of the Dominican Republic. The YOD Partnership respectfully calls for an end to all such exports of animals caught in drive hunts.

Conservation and education are the main focus of the YOD campaign. With a new agreement negotiated during the Western African Talks on Cetaceans and their Habitats (WATCH) in October, the foundation was laid for one of the largest cetacean agreements under the auspices of CMS.

Events have been run in more than 30 countries from Panama to New Zealand. In Kenya events varied from one involving a large audience with children as main actors and audience took place to the development with the Kenya Wildlife Service of code of conduct for whale watching.

Educational campaigns were run by all YoD founding partners and supporting organisations. More than 1500 online dolphin diplomas developed by WDCS were awarded to dedicated children and teenagers. In addition, the Founding partners have launched major awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the threats to dolphins.

The Convention on Migratory Species (a UN body) declared 2007 as 'The Year of the Dolphin' (YOD). Four other founding partners joined with CMS in this celebration and commitment to

furthering whale and dolphin conservation and protection; namely the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), The Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Sea (ASCOBANS), The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS) and TUI-AG, the major travel company. Together the Partners make up a cross-section of the public, with representatives of intergovernmental bodies, civil society and commerce. The Partners are committed to bringing this unique mixture of expertise to bear on the issues facing cetaceans in this Year of the Dolphin.

They call on all those committed to cetacean conservation to continue their support for Year of the Dolphin which is being extended into 2008.

Notes for editors

Major achievements of the Year of the Dolphin include conservation and educational activities.

Following the conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region in September 2006, the first meeting of the signatories was held in March this year. Countries and territories of the Pacific Islands endorsed a new regional Whale and Dolphin Action Plan in September.

During the West African Talks on Cetaceans and Their Habitats (WATCH) held in October, CMS created the framework for one of the largest agreements on small cetaceans under its umbrella. The agreement is expected to be concluded in 2008.

At the Meeting of Parties to the ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black and Mediterranean Seas), progress was made towards the establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), reducing noise pollution, bycatch and other major threats to cetaceans in this area.

Another important focus of the campaign has been awareness raising and educational initiatives with publications in 8 languages being distributed in major tourist destinations. Events took place across the world, from Europe, to Kenya, India, the Philippines, Oceania and Latin America.

Contact

UNEP/CMS Secretariat
Veronika Lenarz
Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10
53113 Bonn, Germany
T. +49 228 815-2409
F. +49 228 815-2449
vlenarz@cms.int
www.cms.int
www.yod2007.org



WDCS contact
Emma Butler, Press Officer
Tel.: +44 01249 449 534
or +44 07834 498 277
E-Mail: emma.butler@wdcs.org