

German Bundestag
17th Legislative period

Bundestag printed paper 17/...
4 June 2010

Motion

CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS

Improvement and continuation of an active and effective commitment to whale conservation

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:

I. The Bundestag notes:

Together with climate change, the loss of biodiversity is the biggest global environmental challenge of our times. Biodiversity, and with it the Earth's natural riches and the basis of our existence, continues to decrease at an alarming rate. To date, we have still not managed to slow down the rate of biodiversity loss and there is no reversal to this trend in sight. We must put all our forces together, both on a national and an international level, and fight against the loss of species. As both warning and appeal, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity.

In these times of ever-increasing threats to the variety of life on Earth, the conservation of whales is of particular importance. Whales play a vital role in the food chain and marine ecosystem. Commercial whaling and the effects of other human activities such as environmental pollution, bycatch and underwater noise pollution have led some species to the brink of extinction and are the cause of a substantial decrease in the size of global whale populations. Currently the number of whales killed worldwide every year, and that includes the Antarctic protection zones, is 1,000 to 2,000. We can only guess at how fatal the consequences will be for marine ecosystems.

The only alternative we have if we want to actively and effectively push for the protection of the large sea mammals that inhabit our planet's oceans is to cooperate on an international level. To this end, the members of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) decided to adopt a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1986. In spite of this, three IWC members, Norway, Iceland and Japan, continued to engage in whaling for commercial, or as they call it, "scientific" purposes. The fundamental differences between pro-whaling nations and anti-whaling nations have resulted in a deadlock and prevented further developments that would improve the conservation of whales within the IWC.

On 10 May 2007, the German Bundestag unanimously passed a resolution committing itself to the conservation of whales and demanded that the moratorium on whaling be upheld. At the IWC conference in 2008, with a view to stimulating cooperation within the IWC and making the commission capable of action, its members decided to create a support group responsible for

drafting a consensus decision regarding the future of the IWC. On 22 April 2010, Christian Maquieira, the Chilean chairman of the IWC, presented the proposed consensus decision which is to serve as a basis for negotiations at the commission's annual meeting where members will address the question of how the IWC will function in future. The proposed consensus decision includes provisions for an interim period until the issues in question are resolved. In principle, the German Bundestag acknowledges the necessity of modernising the IWC. It appreciates the attempt to reach a compromise and supports the following parts of the proposal intended to improve the conservation of whales:

- the creation of a new South Atlantic whale sanctuary;
- the establishment of a Conservation Programme Committee;
- the recognition of non-lethal uses and the value of whales;
- an increase in participation of non-governmental organisations.

In general however, the current version of the proposed consensus decision falls short of its objective to improve the conservation of whales worldwide. The present proposed consensus decision:

- condones the introduction of catch quotas for commercial whaling; includes the hunting of highly endangered species (such as fin whales and sei whales);
- denigrates the status of the Antarctic sanctuary created in 1996 by including
- catch quotas for the South Ocean sanctuary;
- could, by introducing catch limits for commercial whaling, result in the
- lifting of the ban on trade in whale products placed by the Convention on
- International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

These are the reasons why the German Bundestag rejects the proposed consensus decision in its present form. Furthermore, the proposed consensus decision does not yet fulfil the requirements of the common EU position of 2 March 2009.

The German Bundestag anticipates that a potential compromise will effectively and actively pursue whale conservation goals and also open the prospect of putting a complete halt to all commercial whaling. At the latest, commercial whaling must end at the close of a transitional period within which the advances made in improving whale protection are regularly monitored.

Moreover, a compromise must include the following points:

- no catch quotas for endangered species and populations (IUCN Red List and IWC scientific committee);
- no whaling in protected zones;
- a larger reduction in quotas and the installation of quotas defined on a diminishing scale compared to actual catch figures, accompanied by scientific safeguarding of the calculation process;
- the prevention of the abuse of “scientific” whaling and the enforcement of the current ban on trade in whale products as placed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

If such a compromise is not reached at the 2010 IWC annual conference, rather than dealing with controversial majority decisions or a potential failure of the IWC annual meeting, it would make more sense to just take note of the IWC chairman's proposal and continue subsequent negotiations in keeping with the above-mentioned points and in preparation for the next annual meeting in 2011. In this case, the moratorium would be upheld.

II. The German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government to:

- follow the decision of the German Bundestag to commit itself to keeping the ban on commercial whaling (whaling moratorium) in place and to reject any proposals that would lead to the resumption of commercial whaling;
- enforce the common position of the Council of the EU of March 2009, in alliance with other EU countries. Among other things, the common position supports upholding the moratorium on whaling;
- advocate the active and effective conservation of whales in the EU and the IWC;
- reject the IWC chairman's present proposed consensus decision as long as it does not abide by the following conditions:
 - a substantial reduction of whaling worldwide by delineating a specific phaseout process for commercial whaling, which within the transitional period would aim for a definitive and early halt to whaling by the close of the transitional period at the latest;
 - an end to the hunting of endangered whale species and populations and to whaling in protected zones as soon as possible;
 - condemnation of the abuse of "scientific" whaling and the implementation of measures to bring it to a halt;
 - non-acceptance of any kind of degradation to the Antarctic whale sanctuary by ending whaling in the Antarctic Ocean; and
 - assurance that the CITES ban on trade is not circumvented.

Furthermore, the German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government to push for a comprehensive IWC reform process and commit itself to ensuring that:

- the conservation of whales become an integral part of the IWC;
- both new sources of danger and whaling itself are approached with resolve;
- the IWC create additional whale sanctuaries;
- all whaling activities are permanently placed under the control of the IWC;
- the hunting of endangered species and populations be banned as soon as possible;
- all other whaling activities still be subject to scientific evaluation in accordance with the precautionary principle and an ecological system approach;
- indigenous whaling be limited to cover local subsistence needs and that the conservation status of whales in the mid and long term continue to be significantly improved;
- Iceland, in view of its application for EU accession, comply with conservation measures adopted by the European Union and the international community aimed at preserving and fostering whale populations.

Berlin, 4 June 2010

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Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier and parliamentary group

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