

May 6th, 2019

Hon. Dr. Ralph Everard Gonsalves

Prime Minister of Finance, National Security, Grenadines Affaires
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Hon. Luke Vincent Browne

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Hon. Cecil O. McKie

Minister of Tourism, Sports and Culture
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Kingstown; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Hon. Sirs,

The undersigned Latin American and Caribbean civil society organizations, dedicated to the conservation of marine biodiversity and their ecosystems respectfully address you concerning the continuation of the killing of cetaceans in Saint Vincent and Grenadines.

As civil society organizations representing millions of people from 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, we wish to recall the negative effects these hunts have on the public. In 2017, two orcas were killed in front of a whale watching vessel, generating international outrage. As a result, you personally committed to put an end to these slaughters noting in *The Antigua Observer* that your government would take a stand legislatively against these killings and stated that “It is important for us to say that we have our traditions and we need to keep traditions, but we can’t keep traditions out of sync with the rest of the world¹.”

We commend your words and recall that many of the countries in our region have a history related to whaling operations. But as SVG, these were introduced by foreign whaling fleets with a negative effect on the natural patrimony and marine ecosystems that yet still need to recover. In the past century, our governments also understood that whaling is an unnecessary and outdated practice. Today, the only country in the Latin America and Caribbean region hunting whales and dolphins is Saint Vincent & Grenadines. As civil society organizations we share your view that traditions cannot be kept out of time from the rest of world. In the 21st Century, we urge you to join the rest of the region in banning whaling operations and continue advancing in consolidating whale and dolphin watching operations as one of the many natural treasures of your beautiful country.

During the past decades, Latin-American and Caribbean countries have made a huge effort to develop regulations and international standards for the whale watching industry that have been essential in boosting the economies of many coastal communities with incomes that annually surpass several millions dollars in marine based operations and related activities (lodging, restaurants, handicrafts, etc). The success of this activity has cultivated a strong sense of pride for our natural patrimony and many of

¹ <https://antiguaobserver.com/st-vincent-to-introduce-legislation-outlawing-the-killing-of-orcas/>

our countries have adopted national laws permanently committed to the protection of cetacean species and some have even declared national whale days to celebrate their presence in their waters each year.

We would specially like to stress that the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR), is a legally binding regional environmental treaty that includes Saint Vincent and Grenadines under which Article 11.(b)(1)of the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife, known as SPAW Protocol, the taking or killing all cetaceans that are included in Annex II must be prohibited.

Moreover, the policies of non-lethal use of cetaceans in the Latin-American and Caribbean region also facilitates the recovery and long term conservation of species that are crucial for the correct functioning of the marine ecosystem. In this sense, we would like to recall that in 2016 and 2018 the International Whaling Commission adopted two landmark resolutions lead by Latin-American and Caribbean countries on this topic. These highlight the importance of cetaceans for boosting marine productivity and increase fish stocks, helping mitigate climate change and facilitating marine biodiversity. In the face of increasing environmental challenges that threaten the wellbeing and survival of the people in our region, we are certain that live whales and dolphins are more valuable and important than ever in the history of the human-kind.

For all these reasons we respectfully ask you to keep your promise and stop all types of whaling operations, including so-called aboriginal subsistence whaling, to bring the use of these species in SVG to the 21st Century .

As bearers of a common history that will always unite us fraternally, the Latin-American and Caribbean organizations signed in this letter wish to commit our greatest efforts and support to this process.

Sincerely

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MEXICO

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<http://www.caribbean360.com/news/cruise-ship-cancels-tours-st-vincent-slaughter-killer-whales-full-view-visitors>