



23 September 2003

To: Greenpeace  
Att. Whale campaigner Frode Pleym

### **Challenge to Greenpeace: Let the people of Iceland make a free choice**

The High North Alliance is writing today to solicit Greenpeace's assurance that it will henceforth cooperate in ensuring the whaling debate is conducted with respect for democratic norms.

A prerequisite for dialogue in a democracy is that it is conducted free from even the perception of coercion, extortion, intimidation or harassment, whether explicit or implied.

There is a large body of evidence, going back many years, that supports comparisons of Greenpeace's tactics in the war on legal sustainable whaling with those of the Mafia. By contrast, the only "evidence" that Greenpeace respects the democratic process is its own rhetoric.

Greenpeace has dismissed comparisons with the Mafia as "balderdash" (Reuters 08.09.03 and Greenpeace media release 09.09.03). Meanwhile, it holds itself up as a shining example of democracy at work, claiming "our right to express our view and seek to convince others," declaring that "when people have all the facts, they make the right choice," boasting that "we ourselves are from many cultures, and have learned to work out our differences with respect," and pretending that "We're not calling for any boycott in any way". "That's not mafia tactics, it's democracy," says Greenpeace of its tactics.

Democracy is not just about having the right to express one's views, or even about respecting the views of people who almost agree with you. It is just as much about respecting the right of others who totally disagree with you. This Greenpeace has demonstrably failed to do.

If Greenpeace truly believes in democracy, its objective with regard to Icelandic whaling should *not* be to prevent it at all costs, but to ensure that having been presented with all sides of the argument, the Icelandic people are able to make a free choice. And should the Icelandic people make a choice that is unpalatable to Greenpeace, then it should simply accept defeat with grace.

Iceland's government is democratically elected and accountable to the people it represents - unlike the Greenpeace organization, whose funders have no voting rights. We can therefore rest assured that with regard to the whaling issue, any measures taken by the Icelandic government reflect the will of the majority of Icelanders.

The High North Alliance therefore challenges Greenpeace to demonstrate its commitment to the democratic process in general, and specifically to the right of Icelanders to choose freely, by publicly:

- announcing that it will at no time call for coercion, extortion, intimidation, harassment or boycotts directed against Iceland, or other nations engaged in, or supportive of, legal sustainable whaling;
- denouncing any calls by other organisations, nations, companies or individuals for coercion, extortion, intimidation, harassment or boycotts directed against Iceland, or other nations engaged in, or supportive of, legal sustainable whaling;
- calling upon the United States not to threaten or invoke economic sanctions against Iceland or other whaling nations engaged in legal sustainable whaling, and should the US ignore its call, to denounce the US.

Only in this way will Greenpeace convince the High North Alliance that it truly believes in democracy.

Within the newly established democratic framework, Greenpeace will still be free to argue that whale-watching is more lucrative than whaling, while the High North Alliance will still be free to argue that the alleged profitability of whale-watching is founded on Enron-style accounting.

Greenpeace will still be free to argue that whale-watching is ecologically sound, that whaling is ecologically unsound, and that whaling interferes with whale-watching. Meanwhile, the High North Alliance will continue to point to the Norwegian experience which demonstrates that whale-watching and whaling can happily co-exist, and to ask what is so ecologically sound about plane loads of polluting whale-watching tourists travelling around the globe.

Greenpeace will still be free to argue that modern whaling is an environmental and conservation concern, and that Iceland's planned catch of 38 minke this year from a population of 43,000 will likely drive the species to extinction. And the High North Alliance will still be free to respond that Greenpeace doesn't believe its own propaganda, and that all it's really after are media attention and funds.

These are time-honoured arguments that distinguish Greenpeace from serious conservationists, and they deserve to be heard - but in a democratic forum, free from coercion, extortion, intimidation or harassment. Let the Icelandic people hear the arguments, let them decide for themselves, and let the chips fall where they may.

The High North Alliance urges Greenpeace to embrace this call for democracy, and live up to its self-proclaimed beliefs without sidestepping the issue or fudging the facts.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest possible convenience.

Yours sincerely

Rune Frøvik  
Secretary, High North Alliance