

# EU votes down Greenland whaling

July 6 2012, by Shaun Tandon

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Activists demand the creation of a South Atlantic whale sanctuary, in front of the hotel where the 64th International Whaling Commission meeting is taking place, in Panama City on July 4. Denmark lost a bid to extend whaling by Greenland's indigenous people beyond this year, with EU nations sharing concerns that tourists were being served a glut of whale meat.

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In a surprise at International Whaling Commission talks in Panama, all other European Union nations voted against fellow member Denmark after saying they failed to reach a compromise to reduce the proposed hunt of the marine mammals.

Delegates voiced concern over reports that whale meat is widely sold in Greenland's supermarkets, saying it showed an industry in disguise and

not an indigenous hunt for subsistence as allowed under the global whaling ban.

Denmark had proposed to let [indigenous people](#) in Greenland hunt up to 1,326 [whales](#) between 2013 and 2018 -- including 10 humpbacks a year -- a slight increase from a previous deal set two years ago after protracted negotiations.

With the [rejection](#), Greenland will not have the right to hunt whales after the end of the year. But representatives from Denmark and Greenland hinted that they were considering defying the Commission.

"We will go home and reflect on what should be done as regards the future," Denmark's commissioner, Ole Samsing, told the conference.

"It looks to me that some irresponsible countries have just gone outside their responsibilities. What a pity," he said.

Whaling critics accused Denmark of failing to negotiate in good faith. In one tense session in Panama, Samsing even insisted that Greenland had the right -- theoretically -- to kill whales with baseball bats if it so decided.

"For the past five years, we have seen an effort by Greenland to progressively ramp up its whale catch and insist that this commission be complicit," said New Zealand's commissioner, Gerard van Bohemen.



Denmark Commissioners talk during the 64th Annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Panama City. Denmark lost a bid to extend whaling by Greenland's indigenous people beyond this year, with EU nations sharing concerns that tourists were being served a glut of whale meat.

India's commissioner, Ashish Kumar Srivastava, said Denmark should have explained why it needed more whale meat. He said that India supported the right to subsistence whaling but that the long-term goal should be to phase it out.

Monaco's envoy Frederic Briand, a veteran conservationist, said that the portrayal of Greenland as icy and barren was incorrect. He said Greenland had plenty of farms and, like Canada, controversially kills seals.

Denmark and Greenland "could have approached their request in a more sensible way, not going directly to war," Briand said.

"This issue also of whale meat being available to tourists, increasingly in a large number, does not make their case particularly strong," he said.

Twenty-five nations supported the proposal, 34 voted against and three abstained. The United States broke with other anti-whaling nations to

support it, citing a scientific study that Greenland's hunt was sustainable.

The United States also practices indigenous whaling. The Commission on Tuesday approved quotas for native peoples in the United States, Russia and the Caribbean nation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Iceland -- the only nation other than Norway that openly conducts commercial whaling in defiance of the 1986 moratorium -- said the Commission had become "extremely dysfunctional" and criticized conservationists.



Ryan Wulff, the deputy US commissioner, addresses the audience during the 64th Annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Panama City. The United States broke with other anti-whaling nations to support Denmark's failed bid to extend whaling by Greenland's indigenous people beyond this year

"I really don't know what we are aiming at. Is it for people to make the oceans some kind of museum?" said Iceland's commissioner, Johann Gudmundsson.

Japan kills hundreds of whales each year using a loophole that allows

lethal research on the ocean giants, with the meat then going for consumption.

South Korea on Wednesday told the commission that it would follow suit with scientific whaling, triggering outrage by Australia and New Zealand which have campaigned for years against Japan's expeditions.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said the [United States](#) was "concerned" by South Korea's announcement and planned to raise the issue with Seoul.

Chris Butler-Stroud, head of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, voiced hope that the Commission's vote on [Greenland](#) would give South Korea "pause for thought" about pursuing whaling.

South Korea has not specified how many whales it will kill and said that it is not obligated to seek approval for its "research." [Whale meat](#) is popular in the coastal Korean city of Ulsan.

The Commission winds up its eventful week-long meeting on Friday with a vote due on a proposal to seek a United Nations role in promoting whale conservation.

Japan and its allies pushed back a vote on the resolution Thursday, saying they did not have enough time to study it.

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