

Pro-hunting nations block whale sanctuary bid

September 11 2018



The South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary failed to get backing from a two-thirds majority of the International Whale Commission meeting in Florianopolis, Brazil

Pro-whaling nations on Tuesday blocked a near two-decade effort to create a South Atlantic haven for the endangered marine mammals,

deepening divisions at an already fractious International Whaling Commission meeting in Brazil.

The South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary was backed by 39 countries with 25 voting against and several countries not casting a vote, and so failed to get the required two-thirds majority from the 89-member body.

Brazil's Environment Minister Edson Duarte, whose country has proposed the creation of the sanctuary since a 2001 IWC meeting, said he was disappointed but would continue to call for worldwide support in the future.

"As minister for the environment in a country with 20 percent of the world's biodiversity in its forests, we feel highly responsible for the stewardship of our wealth, for the whole world, and this goes for cetaceans as well," Duarte said to applause from delegates.

Co-sponsored by Argentina, Gabon, South Africa and Uruguay, it was first discussed in 1998 and voted on since the 2001 meeting of the IWC.

Pro-whaling nation Japan voted against the project. The Japanese delegation has pushed for a rule change at the biennial meetings that would allow decisions to be made by simple majority instead of the current three-quarters majority.

This would make it easier for Japan to push through its proposal to end a 32-year moratorium on commercial whaling and re-introduce "sustainable whaling," much to the ire of those nations that are against the practice.

It would also, as Japanese foreign ministry officials pointed out at the Brazil meet, have enabled the creation of the long-envisioned South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary.

New Zealand's Commissioner Amy Laurenson, speaking in favor of the sanctuary, told the meeting it was about protecting [whales](#), "not about determining the outcome for other areas of the world."

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Citation: Pro-hunting nations block whale sanctuary bid (2018, September 11) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-09-pro-hunting-nations-block-whale-sanctuary.html>

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