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Við, undirritaðir hvalasérfræðingar teljum, byggt á útlitseinkennum, að miklar líkur séu á að hvalurinn sem var landað laugardaginn 7. Júlí ('Hvalur 22') hafi, þvert á þær upplýsingar sem íslensk yfirvöld hafa veitt um að dýrið hafi verið blendingur steypi- og langreyðar, í raun verið steypireyður.

We, the undersigned blue whale / cetacean experts believe, based on morphological characteristics, that there is a strong possibility that the whale landed last Saturday 7 July ('Whale 22') was a blue whale, contrary to reports by the authorities that it is a blue whale / fin whale hybrid.

Þó prófanir leiði í ljós að hvalurinn hafi verið blendingur ber að hafa í huga að slíkir blendingar eru sjaldgæfir og því mikilvægir fyrir rannsóknir og vísindi. Blendingar steypi- og langreyða eru afar mikilvægir hvað varðar rannsóknir til þess að auka skilning á tegundaþróun og náttúrulegum ferlum í umhverfi. Það er því mikil eftirsjá í því að undanfarna áratugi hafa að minnsta kosti fjórir slíkir blendingar verið veiddir af íslenskum hvalveiðiskipum.¹

Even if tests reveal the whale to be a hybrid, these are rare and therefore of great value to research and science. Blue whale x fin whale hybrids are extremely important for scientific efforts to better understand different evolutionary and even ecological processes. It is regrettable that over the last decades, at least four such hybrids have reportedly been killed in Icelandic whaling operations.¹

Við vísum til 3. greinar íslenskra laga 263/1949² sem vísar til frekari reglugerðar 163/1973³, hvar segir í 2. grein:

Bannað er að veiða:

b) Grænlands-sléttbak, Íslands-sléttbak, hnúfubak og steypireyð.

We refer to Article 3 of the Icelandic Whaling Act, 1949² and to further regulations under Paragraph two of the Icelandic Regulation on Whaling 163/1973³ which state that:

It is forbidden to hunt:

b) Bowhead whales, northern right whales, humpback whales and blue whales.

Í 10. gr. laga 263/1949 segir meðal annars: Kyrrsetja skal skip, sem staðið er að meintum ólöglegum veiðum, þegar það kemur til hafnar, og er eigi heimilt að láta það laust fyrr en dómur hefur verið kveðinn upp í máli ákærvaldsins gegn skipstjóra skipsins eða máli hans lokið á annan hátt og sekt og kostnaður hefur verið greitt að fullu.

Article 10 of the Icelandic whaling act 263/1949 states that: Ships that are caught in alleged illegal hunting are to be grounded once they come to port and held until the court has ruled in the case of the prosecution against the captain of the ship or else the case has been solved by different means and the fines and legal costs have been paid in full.

Jafnframt vísum við til ályktunar CITES Res Conf 10.17 (Rev CoP14)⁴ hvar segir að varlega skuli farið varðandi blendinga og að í tilvikum hvar annað 'foreldrið' er skilgreint í CITES viðauka I en hit í viðauka II, skuli fylgja takmörkunum viðauka I. Í ljósi þess að öll ríki jarðar önnur en Ísland eru samþykkt því að steypireyðir falli undir CITES viðauka I, er samkvæmt ofangreindri ályktun ekki leyft að flytja inn kjöt eða aðra vöru unna úr steypireyðum til Japans eða annara landa.

We further note that under CITES Res Conf 10.17 (Rev CoP14)⁴, hybrids are treated with the precautionary approach and in cases where the 'parents' of hybrids are species listed in different

Annexes, or when only one 'parent' is listed in the Annexes, the provisions of the more restrictive Annex apply. A blue x fin hybrid would be treated as Appendix I. Given that Iceland is the only country in the world to take out a 'reservation' against the listing of blue whales under Appendix I of CITES (thereby the only country treating the species as Appendix II), exporting the meat of a blue whale / fin whale hybrid to Japan or any other country for commercial purposes would be prohibited.

Af ofangreindum ástæðum köllum við eftir því að hvalveiðiflotinn verði kyrrsettur uns skorið hefur verið úr með erfðavísarannsókn, án vafa, um tegund umrædds hvals.

We, therefore, call for the whaling vessels to be grounded, pending immediate genetic testing, to prove beyond doubt the species in question.

Sincerely,

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¹<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1601-5223.1991.tb03554.x>

²<https://www.althingi.is/lagas/142/1949026.html>

³<https://www.reglugerd.is/reglugerdir/allar/nr/163-1973> <https://iwc.int/total-catches>

⁴<https://www.cites.org/eng/res/10/10-17R14.php>