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Speaking notes – ban on commercial whaling

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Mr/Ms President, Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

Let me thank the European Parliament for recalling the importance of effective conservation of whales ahead of the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission taking place next week in Agadir, Morocco.

The priority issue in relation to this forthcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission is to find a solution on the future of the IWC.

The stated objectives of the IWC are to conserve whales and to manage whaling operations. Following years of overharvest, the IWC adopted a moratorium on commercial whaling in 1982. Since then, years of protracted and unresolved debate over the proper means to conserve, utilise, and study whales have made members of the IWC concerned about the body's future relevance and therefore a process was started to resolve this deadlock situation.

As you know, the European Union is very committed to the protection of whales and has put in place legislation that ensures a high level of protection in this regard. Commercial whaling is not allowed in the European Union.

Based on this strong will to conserve whales, last year the Council adopted a Decision on the EU position for the next 3 annual meetings of the International Whaling Commission with the overarching objective "to ensure an effective international regulatory framework for the conservation and management of whales guaranteeing a significant improvement in the conservation status of whales in the long term and bringing all whaling operations under the control of the International Whaling Commission".

The EU calls for an effective protection of whales worldwide and in this respect; we still view the IWC as a valuable instrument to achieve this objective at the global level.

The European Union is encouraged by the current efforts to break the long-standing deadlock within the IWC. However, we would not be prepared to accept a final compromise unless this paved the way to a truly effective regulatory framework of the conservation and management of whales that would guarantee a significant improvement in their conservation status in the long term. We need to maintain the moratorium on commercial whaling and put all whaling operations under IWC control. The EU is assessing proposals such as the current IWC Chair's compromise and will propose improvements in the light of this overarching principle.

We will also need to maximise European Union's influence in the International Whaling Commission. That means ensuring unity in external representation and sincere cooperation among the Member States of the European Union.

Mr/Ms President, Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

I can assure you that the European Union will work constructively in the International Whaling Commission and elsewhere towards obtaining a "good universal agreement for the conservation of whales", as it was highlighted in the Resolution of the European Parliament of 2009. With a solid European Union position we can contribute to a constructive solution that will ensure the most effective protection of whales worldwide.

Thank you for your attention.