

COMMENTS FOR OPENING OF WHALE SYMPOSIUM
United Nations Headquarters
New York City
April 12-13, 2007

Good Morning.

My name is Chuck Fox, and I serve as a Senior Officer at the Pew Charitable Trusts.

I want to thank all of you for being here this morning, particularly those of you, and there are many, who have traveled long distances to participate in this symposium

Your dedication is a testament to the importance of the issue which lies at the heart of these discussions, which is the need to secure a safe and sustainable future for the great whales of the world.

Finally, I would like to convey a special note of thanks to the staff of the Varda Group who have assisted in the planning of this event, to Sir Geoffrey Palmer, who has most generously agreed to chair the symposium, and to the United Nations Environment Program for their willingness to facilitate hosting us all in UN Headquarters.

Twenty five years ago, the world celebrated one of the most heralded environmental successes of the 20th century, with the adoption of a moratorium on commercial whaling.

There is no question that without the moratorium and other modern conservation efforts, today's whale populations would be far smaller than they are. Some may even have become commercially extinct. Yet, despite this success, we all know that today's whales face continued serious threats.

We come together today because we have an international whale conservation regime that appears to be failing to meet its goals.

We come together today, more importantly, to identify a way forward that will ensure the conservation of the world's whales for centuries to come.

For the first time since 1982, the pro-commercial whaling countries won one vote by the end of last year's IWC meeting, and may continue to hold a simple majority at next month's annual meeting. And, as you all know, a simple majority is sufficient to re-write the IWC rules, which could pave the way toward a resumption of commercial whaling.

It is our hope that you can help us develop ideas that will improve the current regime, and perhaps break the impasse at the IWC.

Thank you again for your willingness to join us here for these discussions. I would like to now turn the podium over to Juanita Castaño, the director of UNEP's New York office, whose kind cooperation and spirit of partnership has made it possible for us to meet here at UN Headquarters.
