

22 January 2024

Monsieur Christophe Béchu
Ministre de la Transition écologique et de la Cohésion des territoires
Hôtel de Roquelaure
246, boulevard Saint-Germain
75007 Paris
France

Re: Marineland Orcas – possible transfer to Japan

Dear Ministre Béchu:

I am writing on behalf of Dolphinaria-Free Europe (DFE), a coalition of NGOs, who have been actively campaigning for years to put an end to the exploitation of orcas in dolphinariums, both in the European Union and in the rest of the world. We are very concerned over plans to move the three remaining orcas at Marineland, Inouk, Wikie, and Keijo, to Japan.

Our three main concerns are:

- a. The commercial use, and potential separation between facilities, of these family members in Japan for public display and also breeding purposes;
- b. Less stringent legislative provisions in Japan than in the European Union on the conditions of keeping/displaying these animals;
- c. Stress caused by transport to Japan and thereafter between other facilities.

The orcas are required to be moved ahead of the 2026 deadline in France banning the keeping/public display of cetaceans coming into force. The three remaining orcas are all captive born at the facility and are, we now understand, being trained to undertake this long, arduous transfer.

We have abundant evidence that shows that the captivity industry, at an international level, will move cetaceans from facility to facility in order to mask their final destination. This is nothing short of 'cetacean laundering' and the animals suffer as a consequence. Should you require evidence of some of these international chains of transfer, please let us know and we can supply them. It is clear that the moving of these orcas from France to Japan will allow commercial companies to circumvent oversight and scrutiny by advocacy groups and the French Government.

Rather than transfers between commercial facilities, where breeding, shows and profit are the driving forces, DFE has been advocating for captive cetaceans to be moved into appropriate seaside sanctuaries. The key difference between a commercial facility and a sanctuary is that the animals' welfare is the paramount priority at a sanctuary. Additionally, sanctuaries do not breed their animals, in order to reduce the number of animals who require help and to help phase out the practice of keeping them in captivity.

In light of the above, we respectfully request that you reconsider this transfer to protect these three remaining orcas at Marineland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Dodds', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Margaux Dodds

Chair

Dolphinaria-Free Europe

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copy to

Madame Sarah El Haïry

Secrétaire d'État chargée de la Biodiversité

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