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CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO COMMISSIONERS  
AND CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS  
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**New Commissioner for Switzerland**

We have been informed by the Director of the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office that Dr. Thomas Althaus, who has been the IWC Commissioner for Switzerland since 1990, will, be replaced in this function, due to his forthcoming retirement, as from the 57th IWC meeting at Ulsan, by Mr. Bruno Mainini.

The coordinates of Mr. Mainini are as follows:

Mr. Bruno Mainini  
Federal Veterinary Office  
Schwarzenburgstrasse 155  
CH-3097 Liebefeld-Bern  
Switzerland

Phone: ++41 (0) 31 325 05 87  
Fax: ++41 (0) 323 56 86  
e-mail: [Bruno.Mainini@bvet.admin.ch](mailto:Bruno.Mainini@bvet.admin.ch)

Please also find attached a letter from Dr Althaus that he has asked me to circulate to you on his behalf.

Dr. Nicky Grandy  
Secretary to the Commission

Your ref.  
Our ref.  
Date May 19 2005

To the IWC Commissioners  
and the IWC Secretariat

Dear Colleagues,

If something is inevitable, it is getting older. Thus for each of us there comes the moment – sometimes welcome, sometimes not so welcome – where we are to step back and leave the field for others. Since the moment of my official retirement will be only September 2006, I took it for granted that I would serve this year the last time as IWC Commissioner for Switzerland. However my government thought differently and decided to send my successor already this year and keep me at home to guard the fort.

I regret not to be able anymore with you and in particular I regret not being able to say good bye to you in person.

So I do it through this letter.

My first IWC meeting was the one in Noordwijk (Netherlands) in 1990. So I have represented Switzerland as IWC Commissioner for 15 years. This is a long time, with interesting, engaged debates, some important decisions but sometimes, as you know, also slow progress. I always tried to stand for my government's position and to fulfil the mandate of my government, which mainly was (and is) to respect the ideas and the provisions of the Convention, to base decisions on science, to act in the interest of conservation and sustainable use (taking into consideration the precautionary principle) and thus hold a position within the IWC, which is congruent with the position and policy of my government on the conservation of nature within our own country and in other international fora.

Even though we did not always agree on matters of debate, on a personal level I was fortunate to meet in the IWC fascinating and kind colleagues from all over the world and from different cultures, who, after these years, I consider to be my friends and who I leave only reluctantly and with a heavy heart. I wish the IWC, but in particular you personally and your families all the best in the future – and maybe some of us will meet somewhere again. I certainly will follow the IWC from a distance with interest in the time ahead.

Please give to my successor a warm welcome and your support.

Before I close, let me extend my best wishes also to the staff of our Secretariat, lead by our excellent Secretary, who have in all these years never disappointed me and have through their engagement, helpfulness and kindness impressed me very much and have become my good friends, too.

Best regards

Thomas Althaus