



Statement on the beluga Hvaldimir

13 September 2024

The recent death of the beluga Hvaldimir deeply saddens us. In August, we signed a letter to the Norwegian Authorities, appealing the permit to move Hvaldimir to a location in the far north of Norway, near the Russian border. We did so after carefully reviewing the available scientific evidence and ethical considerations. We look forward to further results of the investigation, but preliminary information shared by the police indicates that his death was not the result of intentional wrongdoing and harm.

Hvaldimir's situation was complex. He should never have been taken captive by humans. We do not know his past experiences, but since escaping captivity he sought human company. We believed that the best course of action for such an intelligent, emotionally, and socially complex sea mammal was to respect his own choices unless there were very good reasons to decide otherwise. There appeared to be no imminent danger to him other than his obvious fondness for people. As Dr. Jane Goodall remarks, "The fact that he died emphasizes how undesirable it would have been to move him." Imagine Hvaldimir living in a remote location, far away from familiar humans.

We are not only saddened by his tragic death, but also distressed by the intimidating tactics that some animal advocates and members of the public have taken, blaming his death on those who argued against translocating him. Within that context we raise the questions: Why would animal advocates claim that other advocates intentionally put Hvaldimir in harm's way? Why can we not listen to one another and if we disagree, do so in a respectful way? Surely measured debate that does not involve threats and bullying is constructive, not divisive.

Much more work remains to be done to help cetaceans and other animals in both captivity and the wild. Numerous species, including our own, face many challenges. We need to work together and focus our energy on real problems rather than unsubstantiated speculations. Let us, as animal advocates, be inspired by kindness, as

Hvaldimir showed towards us. This is a more appropriate way of remembering and honouring this unique individual. History teaches us that hate and anger achieve nothing. RIP Hvaldimir, may your passing remind us that to create a more respectful world for all animals, we, as humans must also respect one another.

Signed by concerned members of the Jane Goodall Institute's Cetacean Committee and Global Ethics Committee.

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