

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 17, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES:

I am pleased to transmit for the Senate's advice and consent to ratification the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, with Annex, done at London June 1, 1972. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Convention.

Though commercial sealing has not yet started in the water and on the sea ice in Antarctica, this Convention provides some valuable protection for seals of that region. It prohibits entirely the commercial taking of three species of Antarctic seals and sets conservative limits on the taking of three other species. It prohibits sealing in the water, except in limited quantities for scientific research. It sets aside reserves where no sealing can take place and forbids sealing entirely during six months of the year. More importantly, it sets up the machinery to give the necessary warning when catch limits are being approached. It obligates the Parties at that point to prevent further sealing by their nationals and vessels. Provision is also made for adoption of additional controls, including an effective system of inspection, if commercial sealing starts in the area. There is nothing in the Convention to prevent a Party from adopting for its nationals and vessels more stringent controls than provided in the Convention. The United States has done this in the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972. While that legislation is in effect, and until the Parties decide to adopt controls and inspection procedures, in accordance with Article VI, no new legislation is needed to implement the Agreement.

Unfortunately in recent years, it has often been only after a species or class of wildlife has become severely depleted or even endangered that international conservation measures have been initiated. This Convention represents a unique opportunity for the world community to put into practice the hard learned lessons of the past and to act prospectively to protect the seals of Antarctica. I urge the Senate to give the Convention its prompt and favorable consideration.

GERALD R. FORD

THE WHITE HOUSE,

December 17, 1975.

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