

Amy Fraenkel  
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Dear Ms. Fraenkel,

I am very concerned to learn that the vaquita porpoise is on the brink of extinction, and I respectfully ask for the United Nations' help in saving these unique and beautiful animals.

As you may know, vaquitas are now considered to be the world's most endangered marine mammal, and they live right here in North America - in Mexico's Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez). Recent population estimates show that only about 200 vaquitas are left and their numbers are declining rapidly. Scientists have warned that the species could go extinct in less than 10 years unless immediate steps are taken to protect them.

The major threat to vaquitas is entanglement and drowning in gillnets used by small-scale fishermen in their habitat. The fishermen do not want to catch vaquitas, but gillnets catch and kill everything in their path. Sustainable, porpoise-safe fishing nets must be developed and made available to these fishermen. In addition, the current, unsustainable gillnets must be removed from the vaquitas' entire range, because even one vaquita death is too many.

Vaquita conservation is not possible without the support of fishermen and local communities in the Gulf of California. Fishermen who voluntarily decide to give up their boats, permits, and/or gillnets to help the vaquita must be fairly compensated or given the opportunity to work in another field. The Mexican Government has had such "buy-out," "switch-out," and "rent-out" programs in place for the last five years, but is in need of funding to continue the program.

I am asking the United Nations to do everything in their power to protect the vaquita before this small cetacean disappears from the earth like the Baiji, or Chinese River Dolphin, did in 2006. The Baiji was the first cetacean species to go extinct because of human-caused threats, please do not allow the vaquita to be the next.

Thank you,