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August 29, 2011

Ministero dell'Ambiente
Direzione per la Salvaguardia Ambientale del Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del
Territorio e del Mare - Divisione III
Attenzione: Concessione d364 CR AX (Pantelleria, Sicily)
Via Cristoforo Colombo, 44
00147 - Roma

e p.c. : Ministero per i Beni e le Attivita Culturali
Direzione Generale per la Qualita e la Tutela del Paesaggio e l'Arte
Contemporanea
Via San Michele, 22
00153 - Roma

Dear Ministers:

I am a professor with a Ph.D. in physics and I teach in the medical school at the University of California. I am writing you to express my concern about the proposed seismic exploration and subsequent drilling in the Mediterranean by Audax Energy of Perth Australia. In addition to the inevitable pollution that will result from these activities, I am particularly concerned about the known effects of low-frequency acoustics (LFA) generated by air cannons. These acoustic pulses are extensively used in seismic prospecting and have been known to kill dolphins and whales by disorienting and stranding them.

For example, the December stranding and death of seven Sperm whales in the southern Adriatic was likely due to seismic surveying. Similarly, a 2006 stranding of 400 dolphins was caused by low-frequency naval sonar. Many other cases of whale and dolphin deaths worldwide have recently arisen since deployment of LFA. The evidence for LFA induced killing of marine mammals is conclusive, having been published and accepted by The Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission.

Both military and seismic prospecting LFA systems typically operate at intensities greater than 200 decibels. This is a very intense and deadly level for marine life. Due to the shallow, confined topography of the Mediterranean in that area, acoustic waves will not only travel throughout the sea, but can be focused and further intensified. Many territories worldwide have forbidden LFA and I am writing to urge you to deny drilling permit d364 CR AX, as filed to your office by Audax Energy.

The subsequent permanent oil wells will be clearly visible from shore and will employ toxic chemicals and generate large quantities of waste water that will have to be transported and treated onshore. Not only will these operations continuously endanger wildlife and generate air and water pollution, they represent a real risk for a catastrophic event (such as the BP well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico) that would devastate the entire Adriatic. Due to the magnitude of

damage to wildlife and the environment, I further urge you to consider adopting the directive of the European Commissioner for energy (Günther Oettinger), who on July 7th 2010, proposed a moratorium on all deep-water drilling throughout Europe.

From what I understand the petroleum is of low quality (requiring an inefficient and polluting refinement process) and the total reserves would constitute *less than one week* of China's oil consumption. It would be irresponsible to sacrifice the environment by permitting oil exploration and extraction in the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, and allow the few in corporations to make a quick profit at the permanent expense of the natural environment that is clearly better suited for tourism, residences, or agriculture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Chou". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Chou
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