



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject: Ocean Embassy Declines Free the Pod Invitation

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The following is a statement issued by Mark Simmons, Ocean Embassy Vice President in response to Chris Porter's invitation to join his campaign:

Ocean Embassy has declined to participate in Chris Porter's Free the Pod campaign, but has offered to work with the Solomon Island Scientific Authority on a management plan for the existing dolphins on Ghavutu Island that could include those animals' release.

Our decision is motivated by Chris Porter's reprehensible and irreconcilable actions and behavior in relation to the Solomon Islands. Routinely obviating scientific study, national and international marine law, sound animal management practices and ethical human and animal standards, Mr. Porter has made any future collaboration impossible, morally and legally.

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Most recently and probably the most disappointing event resulted from his recent dolphin collection. The 17 animals Mr. Porter and his company proposed for release were collected from the Solomon Islands Dolphin Abundance Project (SIDAP) study grid, thereby contaminating data and prematurely ending this important research. This has compromised nearly five years of research and investment of more than USD \$350,000. The lead researcher for SIDAP has officially made this determination.

Our decision to decline participation is also based on the collective opinion of our experts with decades of experience in animal rescue, rehabilitation, care and training: the Free the Pod release plan is greatly flawed.

Clearly these animals could not be deemed “released” if human contact and dolphin feeding were allowed to continue as Mr. Porter has described. The Free the Pod plan is not a bona fide release, it is a form of zoological program in that human contact is provided, encouraged, and no effort will be made to encourage behaviors that will allow these animals to survive in the wild.

If the Solomon Islands Scientific Authority rules that a legitimate release is necessary, Ocean Embassy will certainly offer an intervention plan through the Ministry of Fisheries. The plan would incorporate the most innovative and professional techniques in rescue, rehabilitation and release of marine mammals and the best interest of each animal in mind.

A successful release plan also will require sufficient funding. What happened to Keiko the famed killer whale should not happen to these animals. Ocean Embassy’s president, Robin Friday, was the director of field operations for the Keiko Reintroduction Project, and I worked alongside him during that difficult time.

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Funding was eventually exhausted, and Keiko's reintroduction program resulted in being cut short prematurely. Keiko was never able to function in the wild, but rather relied on the handouts of Norwegian fisherman until he died.

It is our understanding that Solomon Island's Scientific Authority will maintain that future dolphin exports are inextricably tied to the geographical limitations required by a new unbiased scientific study. These exports also will be limited to a level below potential biological removal standards suggested by international wildlife management guidelines. In addition, dolphins will only be provided to zoological institutions with documented compliance to high animal care standards.

Ocean Embassy has been working in the Solomon Islands for nearly seven years and invested well over one million dollars to the community, dolphin facility support and employee animal care and behavioral training. It conducted a successful dolphin transport to Dubai with zero animal mortality, contrary to the fabricated stories of fundraising activists.

We continue to see a future where limited dolphin exports, local dolphin population studies, new international zoological dolphin experiences and captive studies can result in a sustainable conservation and business initiative for the Solomon Islands. However, Porter has not followed any recognized standards in the care and management of these resources and has thus compromised the reputation of the Solomon Islands as a responsible steward.

We have a high degree of certainty that Mr. Porter has been unable to sell these animals for export and engineered this current scheme to raise alternative income.

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