



FISHERIES AGENCY
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES, GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN

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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Parliamentary Secretary “Misinformed”

January 9, 2002.

A senior official in Japan’s Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Masayuki Komatsu, today issued a challenge to Australian Parliamentary Secretary Sharman Stone to tell the Australian public the truth about Japan’s whale research program in the Antarctic.

Mr. Komatsu said “Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Sharman Stone is clearly misinformed about whaling issues. I urge her to read the reports of the International Whaling Commission’s Scientific Committee and tell the Australian public the truth. The fact is that Japan’s whale research in the Antarctic is providing valuable scientific information.”

Mr. Komatsu’s remarks came in response to a press release issued by Dr. Stone’s office on January 2, 2002 following a meeting in the Antarctic between the Australian icebreaker *Aurora Australis* and Japan’s whale research vessels. Mr. Komatsu said “if Dr. Stone had done her homework before simply repeating the anti-whaling rhetoric of Greenpeace, she would know that both the quality and quantity of data from Japan’s research programs have been commended by the IWC’s Scientific Committee.”

In 1997, the IWC’s Scientific Committee conducted a major review of Japan’s whale research program in the Antarctic. This review concluded that that the research program has provided considerable data which could be directly relevant for management and that the results of this program have the potential to improve the management of minke whales. Contrary to Dr. Stone’s comments, the Scientific Committee also noted that non-lethal means to obtain some of this information are unlikely to be successful in the Antarctic.

Mr. Komatsu said “I don’t know if the Australian public ever listens to parliamentary secretaries but if they did so on this occasion they were certainly misinformed. Dr. Stone’s comments directly contradict the conclusions of the IWC’s Scientific Committee.” Mr. Komatsu also urged “Dr. Stone should also read the text of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling so that she would know that the reason whale meat ends up on Japanese dinner plates is because the Convention requires that the by-products of the research be processed.” “This is simply a matter that valuable food resources should not be wasted” he added. Mr. Komatsu noted however that Dr. Stone did acknowledge that Japan’s whale research program is perfectly legal under the Convention.

Mr. Komatsu explained that “historically, Australia, New Zealand and a number of other western countries decimated whales stocks only for their oil and wastefully dumped 90% of the whale carcass while Japan has a long tradition of fully using the animals caught without waste.” “Further,” he said “Australia is not doing any significant research on whales. They should understand that the management of all of our marine resources should be based on scientific findings and appreciate Japan’s research as a significant contribution”.

Mr. Komatsu explained that Japan’s research program in the Antarctic began in 1987 in response to claims that there was insufficient scientific information on whales and that the program involves both lethal and non-lethal research techniques such as sighting surveys and biopsy sampling. “While certain information can be obtained through non-lethal means, other information requires sampling of internal organs such as ovaries, ear plugs and stomachs” he said.

Mr. Komatsu explained that while Australia has a position opposed to whaling, anti-whaling is not the majority world-view. In fact, in 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, reaffirmed the provisions of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, an agreement that permits whaling on the high seas, and explicitly rejected the efforts of anti-whaling nations to exclude whales from the list of resources open to sustainable use and development. Further, at both the 1997 and 2000 Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, more than half the countries present supported the controlled use of minke whales. Many fishing nations including Norway, China, Korea, Russia and Iceland, as well as many developing countries support the sustainable use of all marine resources (including whales) and research programs that provide for science based resource management decisions.

Mr. Komatsu noted that even Australia supported a resolution adopted by consensus at last year’s meeting of the IWC to make the study of interactions between whale stocks and fisheries a matter of priority. Mr. Komatsu said “perhaps parliamentary secretary Stone doesn’t understand that this means that we need to examine stomach contents of some number of whales”.



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Mr. Komatsu said “Sustainable use of resources is the world standard. Australia, along with New Zealand, are beginning to be isolated on the issue of whaling”. “Australia’s position that its OK to kill millions of kangaroos each year and at the same time criticize Japan for killing 440 minke whales from an abundant population in the Antarctic is simply an irrational, hypocritical double standard” he said. “Dr. Stone should stick to kangaroos but if she wants a briefing on the issue of whales, I would be happy to send 1 or 2 of my staff to explain these matters” said Mr. Komatsu.

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