

"Only science will save the IWC"

says Japan

July 27, 2001.

Japan today called once again on the IWC to base their work on science and appealed to delegates to leave emotion and personal political agendas at home. Minoru Morimoto, Japan's Commissioner to the IWC urged UJK Fisheries Minister Elliot Morley and New Zealand's Conservation Minister Sandra Lee amongst others to stop using the IWC as a platform to support their political positions at home.

As the 53rd annual meeting of the IWC drew to a close in London today Japan reminded the world of the importance of marine resources to world food security and the need for whales to be seen as a marine resource whose management should be based on science and not emotion. Mr Morimoto summed up Japan's feeling after yet another largely deadlocked conference:

"There has been some movement on issues that are important to us, but Japan still remains extremely disappointed that once again emotion and political dogma has overridden science and blocked any progress on completion of the Revised Management Scheme (RMS). The IWC is a whaling organisation, its remit is to manage and conserve whale stocks to allow the orderly development of the whaling industry. It is not a protectionist organisation, and non-whaling members who are continually blocking the adoption of the RMS are simply damaging the credibility of the Commission. Other international organisations are getting increasingly frustrated by the IWC's inability to make any substantial progress in the sustainable management of whales. If we are unable to release this deadlock soon the very existence of the IWC will come into question."

"Despite our disappointment over the RMS we were pleased to see the Commission unanimously adopted our joint resolution with the US on the urgent need for further research into the relationship between whales and fish stocks. We have been conducting specific research into this topic for some years and it is very pleasing to have the importance of this issue recognised by the Commission."

Mr Morimoto went on to commend the Commission's decision to reject, once again, New Zealand and Australia's proposal for a whale sanctuary in the South Pacific. "This should send a strong message that their proposal was not based on science, was not needed for conservation purposes and frustrated rather than fulfilled the legal obligations of the Commission to resume whaling on a sustainable basis." The Commission also rejected a proposal by Brazil for a sanctuary in the South Atlantic.

The Commission's decision to prevent Iceland from returning to the IWC is in the view of Japan in contravention of customary international law. "This action was taken despite the fact Iceland had fulfilled all the legal requirements for membership and had paid its

membership contribution in full. Iceland had rejoined the IWC with a legal reservation on the moratorium on commercial whaling. This is just another demonstration that the IWC is dysfunctional," said Mr Morimoto.

"We are pleased that this meeting has seen half of the member nations supporting pro-use policies. This should begin to dispel the myth that it is just Japan and Norway against the rest of world. This is simply not true. Sustainable use is now the world recognised standard for international conservation and management organisations so it should be of no surprise that the number of delegate countries supporting pro-use continues to grow each year."

Mr Morimoto concluded by looking forward to next year: "Japan is looking forward to welcoming the Commission to Shimonoseki next year and hope that we can continue the progress towards the normalisation of the IWC and the long awaited adoption of the RMS."