

**Statement by H.E. Yasue Funayama,
Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan,
under Agenda item 3
(submitted by Japan)**

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Commissioners and delegates,

Japan has been playing a constructive role in the negotiation to redress the state of conflict in IWC since its 59th Annual Meeting held in Anchorage in 2007. This is because our country supports the spirit of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and the principle of ensuring the protection and recovery of depleted whale stocks and conducting whaling operations for abundant whale stocks in compliance with sustainable catch limits calculated based on scientific advice. This is the coherent policy we firmly maintain and apply to all marine living resources.

The IWC has been engaged in intensive and very difficult discussions, considering various deep-rooted problems it faces, to recover its own function as a resources conservation and management organization. Based on such discussions, on April 22 of this year, the proposed Consensus Decision was presented by IWC Chair, Ambassador Cristian Maquieira and IWC Vice-Chair, Ambassador Anthony Liverpool. This proposal actually contains elements that are very difficult for Japan to accept, however, I appreciate it as the one and only realistic approach to save the polarized IWC. Therefore, our delegation came to Agadir with a strong determination to discuss this proposal in earnest until the last moment. I would like to take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Maquiera and Ambassador Liverpool for having presented the courageous proposal, as well as to Sir Geoffrey Palmer, for chairing the Support Group, with his splendid leadership.

Japan has been actively and positively contributing to the Future of the IWC process, having offered a number of concessions after very difficult coordination of our domestic concerned parties. For example, we have expressed our flexible attitude to accept: catch limits substantially reduced from the present level for the 10-year interim period; enhanced monitoring control and surveillance measures such as an international observer scheme, a vessel monitoring system, a DNA registry scheme; as well as participation in a series of conservation programs which Japan has been avoiding as a reflection of the confrontation within IWC in the past; provided that the whole agreement would be fair and balanced.

However, in spite of the vigorous and constructive discussion from last week, the Commission has not seen a way to reach a consensus so far.

We have to face the cause of this situation and find the way forward.

One of the key elements is to focus discussions and information based on science. However, attending an annual meeting of the IWC for the first time, I was aghast at the fact that even whaling which has no problem with sustainability from the scientific point of view is denied here at the end of the day only because public opinion does not accept it, although each country advocates the importance of conservation and management of whale resources based on the scientific advice. It shall never be regarded as science to insist that not even a single whale can be allowed to be taken in the name of “conservation of whales”. We should pledge to respect science, precisely because there are fundamental differences in positions on whaling among the Parties.

Moreover, I believe that finding an acceptable point of compromise, recognizing the differences in each other’s positions or views would be proof of a mature international community. I recognize that there are opinions such as “No whaling except for indigenous subsistence whaling is acceptable” and, ”Not even a single whale should be taken” within IWC. However, to continue to request elimination of whaling and sticking to such positions means the breakdown of the Future of the IWC process, our sublime attempt. I believe each member country should cooperate towards accomplishment of the shared objective of appropriate conservation of whale resources and management of whaling.

What is needed is for participating countries to have a dialogue from a broader perspective, being disengaged from intolerant domestic politics, in order to revitalize this important international organization, the IWC.

It is for this reason that Japan has been advocating that our discussions should be based on the Chair and Vice-Chair’s proposal, and keeping its positive and flexible attitude. However, it is regrettable that there are some members among the concerned Parties, who are not accepting it as a basis of our discussions, regarding it as unsatisfactory.

Japan sincerely expects that all concerned Parties will continue to make every effort to achieve a consensus decision, following the approach presented in the Chair and Vice-Chair’s proposal.

Thank you.