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JAPAN'S OPENING STATEMENT TO THE 62nd ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

The Government of Japan expresses its sincere appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting the 62nd Annual Meeting of the IWC and for the warm hospitality we have received.

The 62nd IWC meeting is destined as an historic event in the long and controversial history of the organization. At this meeting, we will discuss the “Proposed Consensus Decision to Improve the Conservation of Whales from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission”, which was presented to the members of the IWC on 22 April 2010, make a decision which we hope will change the fate of the IWC.

Japan has been a strong supporter of the “Future of the IWC Process” because we firmly believe that the IWC should be a fully functional international organization for the conservation and management of whales and that a “paradigm shift” is needed to achieve this as noted in the proposed Consensus Decision. No doubt, this is an extremely difficult process for all member countries as the paradigm shift requires compromises equally from those who oppose whaling and those who support sustainable whaling based on scientifically based conservation and management measures. There should be no clear winner or loser in this process because all member countries in the IWC desire healthy whale populations.

In this process, we could all work together with the spirit of collaboration, trust and mutual respect for differences, while without prejudice to the respective fundamental positions on matters of principle or prejudicing their future rights, as the proposed Consensus Decision mentions. We have made a remarkable progress under those efforts. However, some countries have recently made hard proposals to phase out/eliminate whaling activities, and there is an even action outside of the IWC. Japan believes that such acts are not compatible with the spirit we had at the outset of this process and is very much concerned because they might undermine our efforts and achievements. Japan has actively and positively contributed to the negotiation process by offering substantial compromises. In order to have the IWC manage whaling operations, Japan is ready to accept reduced quotas, the placement of international observers on board whaling vessels, the deployment of satellite based real-time vessel monitoring systems (VMS), registers and market monitoring with DNA “finger prints”, among others. Japan is also ready to accept the conservation programs included in the proposed Consensus Decision provided that compromises come from all member countries

and that the final outcome is fair and balanced.

These are substantial compromises on our part. On the other hand, it is very important for Japan that the Consensus Decision respects Japan's interests. While we appreciate that the proposed Consensus Decision includes a catch limit for Japan's coastal whaling communities, there is still a significant discrepancy between the catch limits proposed for the 10-year interim period and those acceptable for us.

Japan reiterates its strong commitment to continue in good faith the dialogues with all concerned states at this 62nd annual meeting of the IWC for the purpose of achieving a consensus. We urge all member countries to cooperate for the future of the IWC.

Concerning safety at sea, Japan deeply regrets that the dangerous attacks directed against Japanese vessels which are engaged in legitimate research activities in the Antarctic have been conducted again this season by a non-governmental organization, i.e. the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, despite repeated condemnation from the international community. The attacks constitute a serious threat to the lives and property as well as to the international maritime legal system. It is important for the IWC to share the information about the violent attacks against our research vessels in the Antarctic Ocean and to take coordinated international actions against Sea Shepherd. Japan has issued arrest warrants for the members of Sea Shepherd and will continue to pursue resolute actions. We urge other IWC members to cooperate, especially the flag States and the port States for the Sea Shepherd, to take effective measures to prevent violent actions from happening again, noting previous resolutions and statements by the IWC on this issue. As this is a fundamental safety issue beyond respective positions on whaling, Japan asks all member countries to respond to this issue with strong commitments.

Japan supports the realization of the management, conservation and sustainable utilization of whale resources based on the best scientific information available. Japan also recognizes differences of views concerning whales and whaling among IWC members and the strong emotions of not only those who oppose whaling but also those who support whaling. Exactly because of this, science, international law, and mutual respect should play a more important role in the IWC. The delegation of Japan will make the best effort to address the challenges facing the IWC through diplomatic negotiations.