



IWMC Conservation Tribune

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NGOs INTERVENTIONS

Matiu Rei, Chairman, Te Ohu Kaimoana, 3 July 2012

Te Ohu Kaimoana is the body established to manage and advocate for Maori rights to fisheries in New Zealand. Maori control approximately 40% of New Zealand's commercial fisheries, a similar percentage of the recreational sector and 100% customary, although we only comprise 15% of the population. Te Ohu Kaimoana are selected by the indigenous leadership from throughout our country and we do our best to represent their views in a range of fora and to our government.

One of life's great delusions is when we believe that our way of doing things, whether its religion, economy, justice and in particular looking after the environment, is better than that of someone else.

Through my eyes, I see the Commission behaving in the same way today that the English behaved when they stumbled upon us and introduced a range of new ideas, systems, and systematic exploitation of our natural resources. It wasn't just their brand of religion which they brought, with missionary zeal – it was a new type of everything - but, one that was mired in gross exploitation.

The “green” movement has many redeeming features but sometimes it forgets that while we might do things they disagree with, we indigenous people are NOT gross exploiters. But we all have to be careful and yes we all have to be green but not necessarily the same hue. Our experience says that the world is a richer place because there are indigenous cultures. It is ironic that countries that have grossly exploited whales for uses other than food and utensils are now imposing their newly acquired “values” on cultures that continue suffer the effects and symptoms of colonial exploitation.

We are concerned that indigenous peoples may not be able to maintain their rights and exercise their traditions and do so in ways that preserve their dignity. Reducing us to groups that must seek permission to continue these traditions – from those whose tastes have changed with the wind – is quite simply degrading.

To have these same countries judge how indigenous we are, our dietary needs and whether our traditions are important to us or not, is maintaining this exploitative behaviour. And we absolutely do not agree that indigenous communities cannot take advantage of introduced technologies to maintain customary practices.

This Commission is already a tool for limiting indigenous tradition through its quotas. These people already have adjusted their lives to accommodate your current system of beliefs. Please give them the respect and dignity they deserve. Let them continue to practice their traditions and exercise their customary rights. Thank you.

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Eugene Lapointe, President IWMC World Conservation Trust, 4 July 2012

This is my 19th participation in the annual meetings of the International Whaling Commission. During these two decades, I witnessed the evolution of the Commission and the many changes that took place. Some of them were positive and others, less and even negative for the Commission. One constant in these changes is the permanent attempt to remove people from whales and to prohibit people from using whale resources. This translates into a loss of sovereignty and ownership of the resources that many nations want to manage.

What the four small-whaling communities of Japan are requesting is ownership over an accessible resource that would help provide food and maintain strong traditions and cultures. It appears, Mr. Chairman, that some components of this august body do not feel the necessity to provide the small Japanese communities with the ownership of their resources that would result in a much better care of the said resources.

As with the debate on aboriginal subsistence whaling, I find the requests being made of the four small-whaling communities of Japan to be, for them, demeaning. I do not see how any human being, community or nation should be forced to get the blessings of an international entity for food that is readily accessible. Proud people living in harmony with nature and wild species are forced to beg and wait anxiously for the outcome of decisions influenced by external forces with detached interests in the issue.

IWC quotas to traditional peoples should not be regarded as a gift – access to food and livelihoods is a basic right.

What we have here, Mr. Chairman is not a request for quotas but an appeal for the respect of the cultures and traditions of the four small-whaling communities of Japan. This should be seen as an enhancement of the important cultural diversity of the world, as a request for the recognition and the acceptance of self-determination.

If the request by the four small-whaling communities of Japan is rejected, we might as well rely on the advice of the distinguished Commissioner from India who suggested that traditional people should change their dietary habits and modify their cultures and traditions in such a way as to phase out the need to access food from whale resources.

If ever this happens, Mr. Chairman, we will have lost the irreplaceable values of specific cultures. If it comes to that, Mr. Chairman, what a tragedy it would be for humanity.

Thank you.

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Toshikazu Miyamoto, Director of Global Guardian Trust (GGT), 4 July 2012.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak.

I would like to take this occasion to thank the Panama government for hosting the 64th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

I am Toshikazu Miyamoto, Director of Global Guardian Trust (GGT) based in Tokyo. As a conservation body, GGT has been organized to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and to use the best available scientific information as the basis for conserving all living natural resources.

Article VIII of the whaling convention is critical to the proper operation of the IWC. We have heard from the Chair of the Scientific Committee in this meeting that the scientific permit whaling has provided the IWC with important information.

We find it disappointing when we see attempts to trivialize the value of scientific permit whaling by suggesting that it is something that it isn't. The fact is that hundreds of scientific papers have been produced and peer reviewed. This substantial body of work adds considerably to our knowledge about whale populations. Anyone wishing to refer to the papers can obtain them on the internet. Some people take the view that this type of information is not of any interest to them and therefore that scientists should not undertake the research.

But as has been said at this meeting in the context of indigenous whaling, the preferences of some should not be allowed to subvert the activities of others when – as is evidently the case – these activities are carried out in a careful and sustainable manner.

By its nature, not all research is for everybody. It is a niche activity that expands knowledge in narrow areas of interest – be it specific subsets of pharmaceuticals, electronics, biology or many other activities or applications. Many of these have measurable environmental impacts.

Understanding the biology of whale populations is one of many thousands of areas of scientific research. Research takes place when there is an identified need, not when there is a global consensus that it should be carried out. Just because I have no personal interest in some areas of scientific research does not mean I should label them invaluable.

While we understand whale biology very well, we need to understand the biological status of whale populations in order to be able to establish appropriate management mechanisms in the future. I would ask delegates to recognize that the scientific permit whaling has produced useful information that has a clear application in the future management of whale stocks and the sustainable use – and therefore the conservation – of whales.

Thank you.

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Mr.Chikimasa Okoshi, International Transport Workers Federation (ITWF), 4 July 2012.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen. It is my great honor to be given this important opportunity to speak in front of you. I am Okoshi of International Transport Workers' Federation, ITF. I am also a member of All Japan Seamen's Union and a gunner on a catcherboat of Kyodo Senpaku for research whaling. I am here today to represent crew members of fishing boats who are engaged in whale-research projects in the Antarctic Ocean.

ITF is an organization not only for crewmembers of fishing boats but also for 4.5 million transport workers in 148 countries including most of the countries who belong to the IWC. Our federation supports efficient use of whale resources when they are sustainably available. We have carried out the research in the Antarctic Ocean over many years to provide the IWC scientific committee with the valuable data.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen. As you know Sea Shepherd consistently put our boats and lives of crew members at risk. These malicious activities are condemned every year at the IWC meeting, but this year again, Sea Shepherd carried out sabotage acts such as throwing bottles containing acidic substance and smoke projectiles at the research boat and released ropes in the ocean toward the fore of the boat to damage the screw and the navigation of the vessels, even having tried to get on board by force illegally. I must stress that it was nothing but sheer luck that no one was injured by the anti-whaling group's persistent attacks in such a severe environment of the Antarctic Ocean.

On behalf of the safety of fishery and transport workers from all over the world, we, ITF, ask that the standards for seamanship be applied to Sea Shepherd. Of course each country should have their own opinion; some are for whaling and others are against. But the international community's rules should not be suspended arbitrarily. Forcing others to change their opinions with violence is not acceptable and we call it terrorism. If you standing on the deck of these vessels when it is being attacked, you would call it terrorism too. We hope that any flag state of these vicious anti-whaling vessels fulfill its obligations as a member of the international community. We also ask any member state which allows this anti-whaling group to call at their ports for refueling to review whether they are meeting their obligations. We feel that it is no different from supporting the terrorist group.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, I am a gunner of a catcherboat, and have been engaged in the research whaling for nineteen years. The research whaling currently conducted by Japan is based on the principle of sustainable use of whale resources. Our members are working hard doing their job and they have the right to do their work safely.

Representing all the fishing workers in the world, the ITF protest strongly against such violent campaign activities by the anti-whaling group, and we request that all the IWC member countries take a firm attitude against this group's vicious acts.

We ask you to stand with us in solidarity against these attacks on workers.
Thank you.