

Jan 11, 2019

A Dec.31 editorial about whaling didn't mention critical facts.

First, Japan is committed to the conservation of whales. It sets strict catch limits based on scientific methodology established by the International Whaling Commission. This ensures the sustainability of all whale species Japan will catch for hundreds of years. As you recognized, not all whale species are endangered. Japan prohibits the hunting of those that are.

Second, Japan's actions fully comply with international law. Whaling is limited to Japan's 200-mile exclusive economic zone, where it has the sovereign right to use the living resources. There is no general international prohibition on whaling.

Japan respected the whaling commission's 1986 "moratorium" on whaling for over 30 years, before exercising its legal right to withdraw from the I.W.C. at the end of 2018. It did so reluctantly, after concluding that the moratorium, which was adopted as a temporary measure, had become permanent mainly because of the politically-motivated objection not based on scientific facts by some member States rather than legitimate environmental concerns.

Third, whaling has been a part of Japanese culture for centuries, just as it has been in Norway, Iceland and Denmark, and among indigenous peoples in the US and Canada, who continue to engage in it.

It is unfair to single out Japan. And it is offensive to dismiss Japan's concern for protection of its own cultural heritage and the industry closely related to it as a "gambit by nationalist politicians" motivated by "short-term political gain."

Takeshi Osuga

Tokyo

The writer is Press secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan