

## 1. Sustainable use of marine living resources

### (1) What is Japan's position on sustainable use of marine living resources?

Japan takes the position that marine living resources should be utilized in a sustainable manner under science-based management.

### (2) What is Japan doing for the conservation of marine environment?

Japan is making efforts to address the issues concerning the marine environment with a holistic approach. For example, on the issue of marine plastic litter, which is negatively affecting marine ecosystems including cetaceans, Japan is tackling the issue in collaboration with other countries.

At the G20 Osaka Summit in 2019, Japan shared the "Osaka Blue Ocean Vision" with the Leaders, which aims to reduce additional pollution caused by marine plastic litter to zero by 2050. To realize the vision, Japan has been supporting developing countries' efforts including by extending assistance to their capacity building and infrastructure development in the area of waste management. Japan has committed itself to provide training for 10,000 officials engaging in waste management all over the world by 2025, and more than 17,000 officials have already completed this training. For details of "Osaka Blue Ocean Vision," please see the link below.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000493728.pdf>

## 2. International Whaling Commission (IWC)

### (1) Wasn't whaling outlawed by the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling in 1946?

No. The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), which founded the IWC, is an international agreement to ensure proper management of whaling. It articulates that it aims not only to "provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks" but also to "thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry", and this language remains effective.

Furthermore, there are serious misunderstandings of the purpose and nature of the decision made at the IWC in 1982 (so-called moratorium on commercial whaling). This decision set the commercial catch limit of zero for all whale species for a certain period of time, but has been widely misunderstood to be a "ban" on whaling due to the false interpretation. The provision of the Schedule to the ICRW which stipulates the moratorium requires that:

- the provision will be kept under review, based upon the best scientific advice;
- by 1990 at the latest, the IWC will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effects of the moratorium; and

- consider modification of the provision and the establishment of other (i.e. other than zero) catch limits.

Unfortunately, this binding provision has been ignored by majority of Member States to date, not because of sound environmental concerns but for political reasons.

## **(2) Why did Japan withdraw from the IWC?**

Japan withdrew from the IWC because it has become evident that proper management of whaling based on science can no longer be expected in the IWC. Before deciding on the withdrawal, Japan made sincere efforts for over 30 years to bring the IWC, which was deviating from the original objectives of the ICRW, back to its mandate. The decision was not a short-sighted exit from global management of marine living resources.

The IWC has a dual mandate under the ICRW, that is, “proper conservation of whale stocks” and “orderly development of the whaling industry”. Accordingly, ever since the so-called moratorium on commercial whaling was introduced, Japan has sincerely engaged in the dialogues in the IWC on the basis of scientific data collected, while actively taking part in the efforts seeking for acceptable solutions to all Member States, with the aim of realizing sustainable whaling.

However, those Member States that focus exclusively on the protection of whales, while ignoring the other stated objective of the ICRW, refused to take any tangible steps towards reaching a common position. Furthermore, it is truly regrettable that the 67th meeting of the IWC in September 2018 unveiled the fact that it was not possible in the IWC even to seek the coexistence of States with different views. Consequently, Japan was led to decide its withdrawal from the IWC. For details, please see [the statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary dated 26 December 2018](#).

## **(3) How will Japan engage in international cooperation regarding whaling?**

While Japan withdrew from the ICRW, it remains committed to international cooperation for the proper management of marine living resources. For example, Japan has been conducting non-lethal sighting surveys in the North Pacific (IWC-POWER, jointly conducted with the IWC) and the Antarctic Ocean, and providing data obtained in these surveys to the IWC as appropriate. Japan’s such contribution and cooperation was welcomed by the IWC Scientific Committee. For more details, please see [page 182 of the report of the 2022 Scientific Committee Meeting](#).

Japan will continue to contribute to the science-based sustainable management of whale resources in coordination with international organizations, including through its engagement with the IWC as an observer.

### **3. Whaling activities that has resumed in 2019 since the withdrawal from the IWC in Japan**

#### **(1) How does Japan conduct whaling?**

Commercial whaling in Japan is conducted in a sustainable manner, targeting only those species whose abundance has been confirmed. Whaling is allowed only within Japan's territorial sea and its exclusive economic zone, and within the catch limits calculated in line with the method adopted by the IWC, the Revised Management Procedure (RMP), to avoid negative impact on cetacean resources. For more details, please see the link below.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/whales/japan.html>

#### **(2) How are the catch limits decided?**

In order to strictly abide by science-based resource management, Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is set within the catch limits calculated in line with the RMP. With the application of the RMP, it is possible to set a catch limit that will not have harmful effect on the whale resources for a 100-year period, even if whales are harvested annually up to that catch limit. The catch limit calculated in line with the RMP is below 1% of the estimated abundance of each whale species, which is extremely conservative. For more details, please see the link below.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fishery/whales/japan.html>

#### **(3) Does Japan's whaling lead to the depletion of whale resources?**

No. Japan only catches the whales whose abundance are confirmed through scientific survey by the Science Committee of the IWC and/or Japan. Furthermore, based on the relevant laws and regulations, Japan has set TAC within the number calculated in line with the RMP, the method adopted by the IWC for the catch limit, which has been scientifically proven not to cause harmful effect on the whale resources for a 100-year period, even if the maximum number of whales within this catch limit is caught. Japan's whaling is conducted within this TAC, and that is why it will not lead to the depletion of whales.

#### **(4) Is the IWC Scientific Committee opposed to Japan's catch limits?**

Japan's catch limits are based on the best and latest scientific evidence shared by the IWC Scientific Committee. In calculating the catch limits, Japan has duly taken into consideration the continuous discussions made by the Scientific Committee on the status of the whale species which Japan harvests (minke whales, Bryde's whales, sei whales), including stock structure and abundance estimates. The process has also been independently reviewed by the prominent scientists from overseas who themselves participate in the IWC Scientific Committee.

#### **4. Domestic and international support for sustainable use**

##### **(1) How long is the history of whaling in Japan?**

Historical and archeological evidence shows that the people along the coasts of Japan have been utilizing whales for more than nine thousand years, and two thousand years ago, organized hunts of large whales were conducted sporadically in western Japan. Whaling in Japan today inherits such historical utilization of whales.

(Source : <http://www.whaling.jp/english/history.html>)

##### **(2) Is whaling supported in Japan?**

Opinion polls conducted in 2019 shows that about 50 to over 60 % of the respondents had a favorable view of Japan's withdrawal from the IWC to conduct whaling. For example, in the domestic opinion survey on Japan's diplomacy conducted in March 2019, 68% of the respondents had a positive view of the decision by the government to conduct commercial whaling within Japan's territorial sea and its exclusive economic zone while maintaining cooperation with the IWC (27% of the respondents had unfavorable views).

(Source : [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_002430.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_002430.html))

##### **(3) Is Japan the only country which supports or conducts whaling?**

In the IWC, almost half of the members support the sustainable utilization of whale resources. It is against the fact to argue that Japan has been an alone and unaided advocate of whaling.

In addition, some countries and regions have long-standing culture and history of utilizing and eating whales, and whaling is conducted today by countries and regions such as Norway and Iceland.