



**Response to Japan's Plan for "Normalization of the IWC"
June 2006**

As Japan and its pro-whaling allies continue to inch closer to overturning the ban on commercial whaling, they have now given their bloody quest a name: "Normalization" of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

However, there is nothing normal about their plan. What they intend to do is strip the IWC of its conservation mandate and return to the days of uncontrolled whaling. The Convention imbues the IWC with the mandate to conserve whale stocks for future generations and regulate whaling. It was one of the earliest international agreements to give formal recognition to an obligation to "future generations." Taken in its entirety, there are many more references to "conservation" than to the conduct and management of whaling. However, Japan wants to ignore the Convention's conservation directive and further disregard the last two decades worth of conservation and protection measures embraced by the IWC and the international community.

International policies and practices evolve to meet changing world situations and attitudes. Whereas Japan and the pro-whalers seem determined to keep the IWC stuck in 1946, when the IWC members focused exclusively on preserving the whaling industry rather than preserving whales. This led to the mass over-exploitation of the great whale species that brought many to the brink of extinction.

Contrary to what Japan would have you believe, it is not normal to try to move an international agreement backward to a specific time period in the past; especially not one that almost caused the extinction of entire species. The world has moved forward since then. Strong enforcement and penalty provisions are now the 'norm' in international fisheries treaties today; something the pro-whalers are not even willing to consider.

If as expected Japan has the voting numbers it needs to make progress on its agenda this year—a simple majority of the countries that are members of the IWC—the pro-whaling nation and its allies could dramatically change the course of the entire Commission at the 2006 annual meeting. For nearly 30 years, conservation countries have been in the majority. They lost that majority at the end of last year's meeting, but some of the pro-whaling countries did not arrive until after all the important votes were taken. If the pro-whaling nations take control of the Commission early on at this year's meeting, they will try to destroy the IWC's conservation mandate and seek to remove the final barriers to the resumption of commercial whaling.

Japan's "normalization" strategy is to shift the IWC's mandate away from any conservation related measures and for it to focus exclusively on generating whale quotas

and the resumption of commercial whaling. Japan stated at the 2005 IWC meeting that it would like to remove from the meeting's agenda discussions on whale killing methods and welfare, creation of new whale sanctuaries and continuation of existing sanctuaries, whalewatching, and the recently adopted Conservation Committee. This would effectively dismantle twenty years of conservation efforts in a matter of a few hours. This year Japan has stated that they intend to remove from the agenda any discussions of protecting small cetaceans (whales and dolphins).

Japan's strategy is to also put the IWC at odds with international trends of transparency by instituting secret balloting for all votes taken by the Commission so that citizens cannot hold their country representatives accountable and tourists cannot choose to avoid pro-whaling countries.

Moreover, the methods Japan has used to secure a simple majority are no less "normal," and are considered by many as a hostile takeover of an international agreement. Japan has increased the number of countries supporting commercial whaling by pressuring small countries to join and vote against conservation in exchange for fisheries aid. This is not the way an international agreement should function under "normal" circumstances.

Japan's "Normalization" campaign must be exposed for what it truly is – the first stages of dismantling the IWC. IWC members governments and civil society have an obligation to fight Japan's untoward efforts. The conservation and protection mandate of IWC must be maintained and where possible, strengthened. The future of the great whales depends on it.