



No Action Arising

The 58th meeting of the International Whaling Commission is of historic note for several reasons, not the least of which is the absence of an annual resolution by the Commission to condemn Japan for that nation’s scientific research whaling program. There are a number of possible hypotheses for this:

Perhaps the overwhelming body of evidence from the past season’s scientific whaling expeditions in the North Pacific and in the Antarctic Ocean, presented by Japan at IWC 58, has so favorably impressed the Like Minded Group, that it has accepted the validity and relevance of this immense body of work as integral to the goals and purpose of the International Whaling Commission, and they wholeheartedly endorse it, regardless of the initial comments of certain commissioners who spoke after Japan’s plenary presentations.

A second working hypothesis has a more immediately pragmatic basis than this, however. This educated guess is based on the endorsement of the St. Kitts & Nevis Declaration, wherein the IWC Commissioners voted 33 to 32 (with one abstention) to recommend to the Commission that it follow a new path. It is possible, perhaps even likely, given the historic precedent set by this vote, that a resolution to condemn Japan for its scientific research would fail, and that action, on the heels of the St. Kitts Declaration victory, would be extremely demoralizing for the anti-whaling lobby. It wouldn’t play well through international media, and the risk of bringing this resolution up for a vote would just not be worth the meager chance that it might be won against these odds.

Of course, we will never know for sure why a resolution to condemn Japan is missing from the agenda this year. It is even possible that no one remembered that this is a traditional part of each meeting agenda, given the excitement and concern generated by other ongoing events. Regardless, the deletion from this year’s action arising is a welcome change and one that may itself prove to be a precedent of historic significance.■

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Observation des baleines - LA solution?

Plusieurs arguments présentés depuis quelques années et répétés lors de cette 58^{ème} rencontre de la CBI présentent l'observation des baleines comme la solution biologique, économique et sociale assurant la conservation des cétacés et des populations qui en dépendent.

Comme toute autre solution exclusive ce concept ne résiste pas à une analyse sérieuse. En effet l'observation de la faune en général et des baleines en particulier n'attire qu'un nombre restreint de touristes. Leur impact sur les mouvements des touristes n'est pas démontré et le poids relatif de cette activité dans la sélection des voyages de loisirs demeure un inconnu.

IWMC reconnaît l'importance de l'observation des baleines dans certaines régions touristiques. De plus ce type d'activité contribue grandement à maintenir dans la population le concept qu'une conservation adéquate du milieu marin et des espèces qui en dépendent est essentielle. IWMC supporte le développement et l'offre de ce type de produit touristique.

Ce n'est cependant pas LA solution à la conservation des baleines. C'est l'un des piliers d'une stratégie qui devraient viser une meilleure utilisation durable et une protection globale des écosystèmes marins incluant son utilisation par l'homme. Nos analyses oublient trop souvent que l'être humain est l'une des composantes de ces écosystèmes et qu'il continuera à avoir un impact important sur ceux-ci.



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Nous devons lors de nos analyses considérer les coutumes et les valeurs de ceux qui ne partagent pas notre vision et tenter de trouver un compromis permettant d'atteindre l'objectif ultime de conserver les espèces. Dans le cas des baleines cela implique d'accepter un niveau de récolte de certaines espèces, d'établir des sanctuaires permettant la reproduction et la protection de ces espèces en périodes critiques, d'encourager une saine gestion des espèces basée sur des données scientifiques. Dans un contexte d'entente on peut aussi considérer une surveillance et des sanctions envers ceux qui ne les respectent pas.

La CBI a ce mandat et doit montrer au monde qu'elle fait ce travail.■

Parity May Breed Cooperation

After spending the last twenty years of its existence as a one-sided anti-whaling caucus, the International Whaling Commission finally achieved voting parity in St. Kitts and Nevis and, potentially at least, began a new chapter as a resource management institution.

The passing of the St. Kitts and Nevis Declaration – a document that recognizes the organization’s past shortcomings and sets out the basis on which it should move forward – has changed the dynamics of the organization and is likely to cause all parties to reassess their approach towards regulated whaling.

The IWC is metamorphosing again. As is well documented, at first it was ineffective at conserving whale species. Then, for a short period in the 1970s, it succeeded in establishing quotas that provided protection for whales. Then it transformed into a political body and put in place a ban on commercial whaling. And now, we hope, it is changing again into an international regulator – which was, after all, its original aim.

In some ways, the IWC typifies society’s struggle to come to terms with environmental issues. After nations stood by and allowed great damage to be inflicted on whale stocks, awareness emerged and action was taken, only for the new measures to be quickly supplanted by more dramatic political steps. Now a new pragmatism has crept into the IWC. The 2005/2006 catch figures show that it is currently regulating only 17 per cent of catches. The IWC clearly has to be fixed. A rational, scientifically-based system of regulation is needed to ensure long-term protection against the over-exploitation of whales.

It seems that for many years the anti-whaling majority mistook its numerical dominance for strength of argument. When it could have been negotiating whale management from a



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position of power, it instead raised the ante through a series of political interventions. Ironically, all this only served to make more visible the IWC's dysfunctionality and cement dissatisfaction with its performance.

The St. Kitts and Nevis Declaration symbolizes the way in which pro-whaling countries have asserted themselves at the IWC in recent years. The regulation of whaling is no longer an unimaginable or unattainable goal. It has become a much more commonly understood and tolerated concept.

As of this week, no side is dominant and all parties have to negotiate from a position of equality. More, they will have to do so with the respect that is due to an equally powerful adversary. This means that compromises and concessions that were until recently unthinkable could suddenly appear much more attractive. The apparent willingness to engage in a discussion of normalization may signal the start of a much more constructive period at the IWC. Regulation may just have found its time.■

As the sun sets...

As the sun sets on the last evening of IWC 58 in St. Kitts & Nevis, IWMC wishes all participants a safe journey home, as they consider the events and emotions that have been experienced here in this lovely tropical environment.

As we all look forward to IWC 59 in Anchorage, Alaska, USA, we dare to anticipate a continuation of the progress that member nations have made here, and we hope for a substantial lessening of the extreme polarity that has become a part of this proceeding.

The issue of sustainable commercial whaling and the management of ecosystems through ongoing scientific research are always going to be regarded as contentious, because rich cultural diversity is a part of the real world. Although all participants recognize their differences, and indeed, partially define themselves through these diverse attitudes and positions, we all know that resolution of real world environmental problems is still our major responsibility. How we get to the point of addressing and then actually tackling these problems is the entire point of belonging to this Convention.

IWMC continues to participate in meetings of this Convention because of inherent optimism that a spirit of global community shall ultimately prevail as honest people make their proposals for a more Convention-relevant IWC course of action. May the future see a stronger relationship among all who work here, for the good of whales and fish and all the people who co-exist with them.■