

**Statement on Traditional Small-type Coastal Whaling in Ishinomaki**

**Submitted by Japan**

The Government of Japan fully endorses following document which will be discussed under Agenda item 9  
“Socio-economic implications and small-type whaling” at the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Whaling  
Commission.

## Statement on Traditional Small-type Coastal Whaling in Ishinomaki

If we liken the shape of Japan to that of a bird, then just at where the bird's breast would be, you will find a peninsula jutting out southwards into the Pacific Ocean. The name of that peninsula is the Oshika Peninsula, and it is an area where modern whaling flourished, starting from the beginning of the twentieth century. My name is Kimio Doi, and I am the mayor of Ishinomaki City, the administrative area to which the Oshika Peninsula belongs.

**I am here at this IWC meeting to represent the people of Ishinomaki and their heartfelt desire for the swift resumption of small-scale coastal whaling.**

The location of the Oshika Peninsula, situated at the southern end of the Irias Sanriku Coast, makes it an ideal natural site for a port. People have been making fisheries their livelihood there since ancient times. Although the area has been part of Ishinomaki City since April 2005, when the city merged with six surrounding towns to make an administrative body of one hundred and seventy thousand people, it was formerly an autonomous district known as Oshika Town, consisting of 15 small settlements dotted around the bays along the coastline. The settlement at the tip of peninsula is the whaling village of Ayukawa, where two thousand of my fellow citizens are currently living.

Whaling was first introduced to Ayukawa in 1906 by the Toyo Fisheries Company of Yamaguchi Prefecture, who started a branch business there. They brought with them modern whaling techniques from Norway. At that time, Ayukawa was an isolated hamlet of no more than fifty households, with no local industry apart from fisheries. However, the area was vitalized thanks to the introduction of whaling, and many people from western Japan moved into the area, making it into a thriving and uniquely multi-cultural community. In 1985, for example,

**when the minke whaling started in April, whale meat could be found on the dining tables of almost every household in the Ayukawa area. Whaling company employees took home whale meat as part of their salary, and whale sashimi was a staple dinner food. It helped to make a self-sufficient and happy community, subsisting on the natural resources of both the land and the sea throughout the year.**

If we look at Ayukawa now, as is already known in the IWC, whaling-related industries are of course in steep decline, and young people who lost their jobs because of the moratorium on commercial whaling have moved away. The town has become a pale and impoverished shadow of its former self. Looking back, Ayukawa saw the peak of its fortunes in the nineteen sixties, when it was the biggest whaling town in all of Japan. That is something that we should be proud of, while acknowledging and thanking our ancestors who worked so hard to achieve it. **However, times change, and I am not suggesting that we should go back to those days of prosperity. That was, unfortunately, also a time when global resource management was completely neglected, with unceasing and fierce competition in the whaling industry, and should never be repeated. What we can do now, is use scientific advances and international cooperation to gain a clear picture of the marine resources available to us, and then use them in a responsible and sustainable manner, within reasonable limits, be they whales or fish, while never forgetting the lessons of the past.**

I am here to respectfully request for the resumption of sustainable minke whaling, a whale resource that has been found to be in plentiful supply. While the citizens of Ayukawa may, on average, be elderly, they are hardworking and diligent, and I am convinced that they can be relied on to carry out any whaling in a responsible and sustainable way.

**To wait for the coming up of the minke whales in spring, to take only a sustainable amount of a resource that is increasing, and to use that resource for food. That is all I am asking, something that is completely natural for any maritime country.** Please

think about what I have said, a matter that if considered rationally and objectively, can be viewed as a universal argument. Let me finally say that most of the people of my city, myself included, when asked if they would like to eat whale meat for their dinner, reply that yes, they would. Please understand that whale is a vital and much-loved part of our food culture.

Thank you for your attention.