

Taiji Declaration on Traditional Whaling

Submitted by Japan

The 5th Summit of Japanese Traditional Whaling Communities was held at Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture on 23 April, 2006. 1,000 people participated in the Summit from all over Japan, in particular from communities associated with whaling. The Summit adopted the “Taiji Declaration on Traditional Whaling.” The Government of Japan strongly endorses this declaration and the document will be discussed under Agenda item 10 “Socio-economic implications and small-type whaling” at the 58th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

Taiji Declaration on Traditional Whaling

Recognizing that the Fifth Summit of Japanese Traditional Whaling Communities was held in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, on 23 April 2006, gathering participants not only from traditional whaling communities but also from all over Japan;

Recognizing that Taiji has a long history of whaling and is regarded as “the birthplace of Japanese whaling”, for in 1606 community members set up a “kujira-gumi,” a large-scale organized whaling company; that in 1675, the whaling leader, Wada Yoriharu, developed an original “hand harpooning with net whaling” method; that Taiji whaling continued to develop throughout the Edo Period with a sustainable harvest, primarily targeting right whales and catching only those animals came very close inshore;

Recognizing however, that by the end of the Edo Period, Taiji “kujira-gumi” whalers had few whaling opportunities because the resources had declined as a result of the Yankee whalers’ increased catches offshore of Japan; and that finally in December 1878, Taiji “kujira-gumi” whaling ended after an entire whaling company was lost when the Taiji fleet, desperate for a catch, attempted to take a mother and a calf right whales (the infamous “oh-semi-nagare” shipwreck);

Recognizing, nonetheless, that Taiji’s whaling tradition itself never ceased and was succeeded by the coastal whaling for pilot whales and by the whalers who worked for the new pelagic whaling activities in the Antarctic; and that today, Taiji whalers conduct three kinds of cetacean fisheries, small-type coastal whaling, drive fisheries, and hand-harpooning; and

Recognizing that this year marks the quadri-centenary of the whaling industry in Taiji;

Therefore, all participants were greatly pleased that the Fifth and the last Summit of Japanese Traditional Whaling was held in such a relevant time and location.

Whereas the Summits have been held annually in places which have strong ties to whaling since the first Summit was first held in Nagato, Yamaguchi in 2002; and the Summits have provided the participants with the valuable opportunities to learn about traditional whaling as well as about the various lifestyles and cultures that are strongly rooted in these traditions;

Whereas the first Nagato Summit provided a general overview of Japanese whaling traditions; the second Ikitsuki Summit focused upon prehistoric whaling; the third Muroto upon whaling in the Edo Period, and the fourth Shimonoseki Summit upon the Antarctic whaling; and the Declarations adopted in these Summits were reported to the Annual Meetings of the International Whaling Commission and demonstrated how important whaling is to Japan;

Whereas, at this year’s Summit, the participants learned that Taiji, the origin of the Japanese whaling, is further developing as whaling based community as follows:

- Taiji as a whole supports whaling and all the townspeople shall benefit from it;
- The consumptive use (small-type coastal whaling, drive fisheries, and hand-harpooning) and the non-consumptive use (whale watching, supply of live dolphins and porpoises to aquariums, and dolphin therapy) coexist in Taiji without conflict; and
- Taiji plays a leading role in sustaining tradition of whale diet by promoting whale meat use in school lunches not only in local communities but also in other communities all over Japan;

Whereas, at this year’s Summit, the participants discussed the future of whaling after learning about Taiji’s on-going efforts and taking into account discussions at the previous Summits; and concluded that the following elements are critical to ensure a “new era” of whaling:

- In considering the future of whaling, it is necessary to consider responsible, ethical relationships among humans, other living creatures, and the ecosystem of which all are a part, noting the following points:
 - The current IWC situation (delaying completion of a Revised Management Scheme and maintaining the commercial whaling moratorium without adequate scientific evidence) fail entirely to consider the impacts of these policies on the lives of whalers and whaling communities;
 - A successful environmental policy should not alienate humans from nature and environment but consider sustainability of the overall ecosystem that includes humans. The unique Japanese concept of “sato-yama” (community mountain) provides such a case. Sato-yama implies active human involvement of nature and environment in which humans act as guardians to ensure nature’s sustainability and balance;
 - Given the ever-increasing world population and the growing necessity for self-sufficiency in animal proteins, we should not negate the use of any animals on non-scientific grounds; whaling is, compared with agriculture and animal farming, an environmentally sound way to harvest food, which makes whaling indispensable today and in the future;
 - Food diversity, cultural diversity, and environmental diversity are closely interrelated;
 - That creatures kill and sacrifice other creatures so that they can sustain their lives is the law of nature and is beyond any consideration of good and evil;
 - Japanese whalers take their responsibilities seriously when they harvest whales, utilizing the animals fully, wasting none of the whale, by building tombs for the whales’ souls and conducting memorial services to honor the animals sacrificed; on the other hand, by differentiating lives between domesticated animals and wildlife, and justifying the killings of the former while denouncing the latter, is discriminatory action considering importance of given animals in particular countries and cultures;
 - It is not only unfair but a manifestation of a double standard to criticize whaling as cruel act by (giving a name to a particular whale and) treating the issue on the individual animal basis while promoting culling of over-populated wildlife (kangaroo, deer, and camel) by treating the cull issue on a species basis for the sake of preservation of species and not focusing on its aspect of cruelty; and
- Under the current IWC policy, Japanese small-type whalers and dolphin fishermen see no promising prospects in the “new era” of whaling and they are looking forward to decisive action by the Government of Japan.

Therefore, we, the participants in the Fifth Summit of Japanese Traditional Whaling Communities in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture, on 23 April 2006, strongly affirming that whaling is not a mere legacy of the past and that whaling plays a key role in realizing sustainable use of living resources in the future, declare the following:

<We will create an “new era” of whaling.>

1. We will create a “new era” of whaling together to provide an example of rational marine resources management to the world.
2. First, the “new era” of whaling should be developed on the basis of the Japanese whaling traditions.
 - A) The essence of Japanese whaling, using all parts of the whale, is a proud Japanese tradition and a sound management practice for the rest of the world to adopt.
 - B) We will pass our valuable whaling expertise and techniques to future generations.
 - C) The different whaling cultures and traditions in Japan’s whaling communities are not simply our heritage but a living tradition and will pass them on to future generations.
3. Second, the “new era” of whaling must be based upon the principle of sustainable use.
 - A) We will establish a balance between conservation and exploitation.
 - B) We will manage resources based on both science and traditional wisdom.
 - C) We will establish ecosystem management, in which the system includes not only whales but also all other creatures that are a part of it.

4. Third, in the “new era” of whaling, we should reconsider the relationship between humans and animals and reaffirm the ethics of whaling. We will actively continue to promote the justification of the use of whales and wildlife, emphasizing both environmental ethics and bioethics.

<We commend Taiji’s efforts to develop the community with whaling as its core concept. >

5. We commend Taiji’s efforts to develop the community with whaling as its core and encourage similar movements in other communities.
6. We encourage small-type whaling and dolphin fisheries to maintain their sustainable operations and to keep contributing to the local community in the future.
7. We strongly urge the IWC to rectify its whaling policy which keeps the Commission rejecting the resumption of sustainable coastal whaling in Japan. We also encourage the Government of Japan, if necessary, to promote sustainable whaling by distancing itself from the IWC policy, which is clearly biased in favour of protection, not management, the latter for which the ICRW clearly provides.

< We reconfirm the previous Summit Declarations.>

8. We support the following Declarations and re-emphasize their importance :
 - A) “Nagato Declaration on Traditional Whaling” adopted in the First Summit of Traditional Whaling Communities in 2002
 - B) “Ikitsuki Declaration on Traditional Whaling” adopted in the Second Summit of Traditional Whaling Communities in 2003;
 - C) “Muroto Declaration on Traditional Whaling” adopted in the Third Summit of Traditional Whaling Communities in 2004; and
 - D) “Shimonoseki Declaration on Traditional Whaling” adopted in the Fourth Summit of Traditional Whaling Communities in 2005.