



### 3<sup>rd</sup> SCH: Whaling in Japan

#### I. Background

For centuries, Japan has been hunting whales for economic growth and hard-to-obtain resources. It is suggested that this whaling began sometime during the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was legal and widely used until the International Whaling Commission moratorium that went into effect in 1986. This was a blow to a very profitable limb of Japan's economy and was met with much disagreement that manifested itself primarily in scientific whale hunts. These whale hunts utilize the scientific research provision that was stated in IWC's agreement and allow the Japanese to continue whaling as conducted by the Institute of Cetacean Research. Although many IWC members are against the practice, it is not breaking any rules that were set in the agreement. States that would be most involved in this issue include the 79 member states of the IWC consisting of nations such as Chile, Germany, Greece, Estonia, Costa Rica, United States and various others such as Australia who is not only a member of the IWC but threatened international legal action against Japan due to territorial whaling boundaries that conflicted with Australian whale preserves near Antarctica. And of course, Japan is involved as well. There are countless voices in the international community explaining why this is such an important problem. The most vocal opponents of Japan's push for a resumption of commercial whaling are the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia. The Australian government is in opposition because they believe in the need for conserving various whale species due to their endangered status. The UK government believes "whaling does not serve any genuine need and involves unacceptable cruelty." And the New Zealand Government opposes Japan solely on their stance against hunting whales for food or research. The most harmful outcome of this whaling would be the extinction of multiple whale species which could lead to the collapse of other species in the marine ecosystem.

#### II. UN Involvement

The UN became involved primarily when the IWC was formed in 1946. Since then it has taken an active role in regulating whaling all over the world to abide by the terms of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. The UN has also acted as a forum for nations to discuss terms of whaling although much debate has occurred outside of UN. One of the most notable incidents of UN involvement is when Australia took legal action against Japan through the United Nations International Court of Justice by accusing Japan for allegedly breaching international whaling law, saying its whaling cannot be justified on the excused scientific grounds that had been put forth. Committees, Organs or NGO's involved include ICRW, IWC, SCH, NAMMCO, RMP, RMS, and Plenary.



### **III. Possible Solutions**

Solutions will differ based on national policy. Nations that are for the practice of whaling throughout the world could attempt to secure a compromise such as whaling only during certain times of the year or whaling only if the whale population is above a certain amount. Nations that oppose whaling could offer incentives to Japan to stop its whaling programs so that it won't suffer economic downturn if whaling is no longer a part of its national income. In addition, whaling could be allowed only in specific sectors of the ocean so as to not further endanger whales in regions where the population is low already.

### **IV. Bloc Positions**

Nations in regions that contain whale populations such as Norway, Iceland, and Australia should be opposed to Japan's whaling programs whereas nations with strong ties to Japan along with nations that profit from whaling along with Japan should be with Japan.

### **V. Guiding Questions**

1. What is your country's position on whaling in Japan and why?
2. What could your country offer to gain the support you need for a favorable resolution?