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MEDIA RELEASE

Japan Welcomes Outcome of Meeting of World Fisheries Organization

Tokyo, March 03.- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Committee on Fisheries concluded its twenty-fifth Session in Rome Italy on February 28th.

Dr. Seiji Ohsumi, Director General of Japan's Institute of Cetacean Research in Tokyo said today, "The Committee on Fisheries has made significant progress towards achieving sustainable fisheries on a world-wide basis." "We are particularly pleased that the Committee has followed up its agreement of two years ago to make the study of ecosystems a priority and that it is working to meet the goal of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development to implement this approach to fisheries management."

Dr. Ohsumi explained that it is now widely accepted that an ecosystem approach to fisheries management will be a significant improvement over traditional single species approaches. "The ecosystem approach takes a holistic look at the relationship between fishing and the ecosystem." "This means that you can't manage fish species individually – they are all part of the ecosystem and we need to know the relationship between species - who eats what, where and how much."

Results from Japan's whale research programs which are designed to determine the role of whales in the ecosystem were presented to the Committee. Results to date indicate that whales consume millions of tons of fish (3 to 5 times the amount caught for human consumption) often in direct competition with fisheries.

Dr. Ohsumi said, "The Committee agreed that further research and data were required to implement ecosystem approaches. We appreciate the strong statements of support for our whale research programs and the recognition that this research is a significant contribution to improving the sustainability of the worlds fisheries made by many member countries of the Committee, particularly developing countries dependant of fisheries to feed their people."

The Committee, which meets every two years, addressed a number of important issues related to ensuring sustainable fisheries world-wide including excess capacity, illegal fishing, subsidies in the fishing industry, ecosystem approaches to fisheries management as well as strategies for increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation. The meeting was attended by representatives of approximately 120 FAO member countries as well as representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

For further information on Japan's whale research programs please go to the website of the Institute of Cetacean Research <http://www.icrwhale.org>