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PRESS RELEASE

Senior Japanese scientist responds to claims that new techniques makes killing whales unnecessary

Dr. Seiji Ohsumi, Director General of Japan's Institute of Cetacean Research today accused Australian scientists of misrepresenting their research in order to make a political statement against whaling.

Dr. Ohsumi said "DNA analysis of whale feces may provide information on what an individual whale has eaten, however, it is unrealistic to collect whale feces which remain liquid in the water, therefore the technique will not provide any scientific data on how much, where, when, and how whales eat. These are essential information for the analysis of marine ecosystem and the competition between whales and fisheries."

Dr. Ohsumi explained that the primary objective of Japan's whale research programs is the development of ecosystem models that will improve the basis for the management of all marine resources. "Ecosystem models require data that can only be obtained from direct examination of whale stomach contents. DNA analysis does not provide a basis to calculate total volumes of prey consumed by whales or the relative importance of different prey species as components of the diet. The Australian approach does not provide statistically reliable data because whale feces can be obtained only by chance", he said.

Dr. Ohsumi said "Australian scientists have misrepresented the usefulness of their research in order to make a political statement against whaling. They are also over-simplifying the marine science". Dr. Ohsumi further noted that "even Australia and New Zealand supported the decision of the International Whaling Commission last year to make the study of

interactions between whales and fisheries a priority.” “From a scientific point of view it is simply not possible to do this without direct examination of whale stomach contents” he said.

Marine mammal interactions with fisheries have become a major issue worldwide. It is an important issue in the context of world food security since the estimates are that cetaceans consume 3 to 5 times the amount of marine resources harvested for human consumption. Many international fisheries organizations, including the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have urged the development of multi-species or ecosystem management systems. This implies increased attention to the study of diet composition and food webs, species interactions and predator-prey relationships. Dr. Ohsumi said “Japan’s whale research programs are fully consistent with these expressions of the need for more research”.

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For further information see

<http://www.icrwhalesci.org/Q&Ajapanswhaleresearchpro2.html>

<http://www.icrwhale.org/JwhaleresAntarctic.htm>