

December 17, 2013

Ambassador Kenichiro Sasae – Question & Answer

Excerpt (54:19 to 58:47)

Susan Hartland, Administrative Director, Sea Shepherd:

Hi, good afternoon, Mr. Ambassador. It's a pleasure having this opportunity to speak with you.

At meetings like IWC and CITES, Japan has historically voted against important conservation methods that the rest of the world has agreed upon. There was even a mention that Japan might back out of the IWC, dependent upon the decision of the ICJ. So as an ambassador, I would encourage you to work with the leaders of Japan in ensuring the strong, long-term protections for whales and marine mammals that are critical to the health of the oceans that we are all dependent upon.

My question is: What can we as individuals and organizations do to help Japan open discussions and participate in discussions to make these protections happen?

Ambassador Kenichiro Sasae

Thank you. I know that there is interest on this specific issue of whaling, not only [in] the United States but in the other countries in the region in terms of preserving the whale and other natures. We don't have any disagreement on the objective of preserving this very important species for the future of mankind. But the issue is that most of Japanese whaling has been scaled down, and there is no operational commercial whaling anymore.

The only thing the Japanese are doing is to go for catching for the sake of seeing the status of the conservation; more for the conservation purpose. But that is disputed by the other countries like Australia. They believe that, under the disguise of this (*indecipherable*), it is used basically for the commercial use and so forth, [with] which we don't agree necessarily.

There has been debate within the IWC for the one part. Japan is not the only country catching whales, as you know. The Nordic countries [also] catch. But mostly somehow Japan is the target of the criticism. We understand it; we have to face that.

This case has been brought to international court now by the Australian government. So it's up there, and there has been debate already done. I think it's now the time for the judges to make a decision. So, at this moment we are waiting for the court decision. Whatever the decision might be, I think the Japanese government is faithfully to follow the decision.

Beyond that, as an individual, I like whales. And if you go out and see the whales, there is no reason for us to kill this lovely animal.

But it's history, and it's politics, I would say. There is a small number of Japanese people still trying to get this won. But the mainstream Japanese are not eating whale anymore. We know some Alaskan people are catching them for their own living reasons; some of the reasons they are legally allowed under IWC, but people don't say don't catch it, because they need it.

But still having said it, we have to be humble about all this criticism and we are waiting for the court decision. But [if] the court decision turns out to be, there is the rational ground for this periodical catching to see the conservation. And then you might argue against it, but we have to follow the international rules.

Thank you very much.