

PEW SYMPOSIUM A CHANGE IN CLIMATE FOR WHALES, IS THERE A COMMON WAY FORWARD?

At United Nations University, Tokyo 30-31st January, 2008

Welcome Address by Dr. Srikantha Herath, Senior Academic Programme Officer and the Officer-in-Charge of UNU's Environment and Sustainable Development Programme, on behalf of Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, Rector of UNU.

- The mission of the United Nations University is to contribute, through research and capacity building, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Member States.
- In accordance with our Charter, we at United Nations University devote our work to research into the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare with due attention to the social sciences and the humanities as well as natural sciences, pure and applied. Our research programmes include, among other subjects, coexistence between peoples having different cultures, languages and social systems, peaceful relations between States and the maintenance of peace and security; human rights; economic and social change and development; the environment and the proper use of resources; basic scientific research and the application of the results of science and technology in the interests of development; and universal human values related to the improvement of the quality of life.
- So it is quite natural for us to welcome the second Pew Whale Symposium here in Tokyo. It is a private initiative of the Pew Trusts which we are hosting today and tomorrow. The United Nations University is always pleased to facilitate constructive efforts of NGOs to address international environmental issues in spirit of good co-operation. In recent years, the United Nations have encouraged multi-stakeholders dialogues to address issues of broad interest to society.
- I am glad to see so many faces from so many different countries and constituencies in the room today, including many friends from our host country, Japan. It is for me a honor to welcome you all on behalf of our Rector Konrad Osterwalder who is unfortunately out of the country today. Dr. Osterwalder ask me to tell you that he has great interest in your discussions and the issues at stake, and that he looks forward to hearing the outcome.
- I also want to express my own profound appreciation of your efforts over the next two days to seek a solution to the protracted whaling controversy. As you know, the International Whaling Commission is not a UN body, and the UN has no formal role in its meetings. The UN family does, however, include a number of conventions which have direct bearing on the matter you are here to discuss: First I should mention the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which places great emphasis on the conservation of living marine resources, recognizing that to protect marine mammals States may take action that goes beyond the provisions of the international regime. In addition the UN-administered Conventions on

Biological Diversity, on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), and on Migratory Species are also extremely important to secure the conservation and proper management of cetaceans.

- The relevance of many multilateral environment agreements to the future of whales and other cetaceans reminds us that these animals are facing multiple threats. This contemporary situation, which of course could not be envisaged in 1946 when the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was signed, reminds us all of the need to be extremely cautious – to be precautionary in our actions, a concept which is at the centre of environmental policy today.
- Your discussions will benefit greatly from the participation of an impressive number of IWC Commissioners and delegates as well as other science and policy experts. The UN is also well represented here with the presence of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Migratory Species, Dr. Robert Hepworth, the Chief of UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch Mr. Olivier Deleuze, as well as the former Coordinator of UNEP's Mediterranean Action Programme Mr. Lucien Chabason. I also note the presence of many other faces in this room that are familiar to the United Nations and its processes.
- It is my pleasure of course to also welcome your Chairman Judge Neroni Slade. Judge Neroni Slade's prestigious contributions since he was the Ambassador of his country to the United Nations are known to us all. It will be a privilege for you to work under his guidance.
- On behalf of Dr. Osterwalder, I would like to thank you all for your participation. I hope you have a very productive meeting that can contribute to creatively charting a new and sustainable way forward. I look forward to the results of your discussions.

Thank you.