

COMMENTS FOR OPENING OF WHALE SYMPOSIUM
United Nations University
Tokyo, Japan
January 30, 2008

Good Morning.

- My name is Joshua Reichert and I am the Managing Director of the Pew Environment Group. I would like to welcome you to the Pew symposium in Tokyo – and to thank all of you for coming, particularly those of you who have travelled a long way to be here with us. We are delighted to have so many distinguished and knowledgeable people from around the world, and particularly pleased to have so many participants from Japan. We are anxious to listen to your perspectives – to all perspectives – on the issue of whales and the International Whaling Commission.
- At this time, I would also like to thank Remi Parmentier, Kelly Rigg and Alex Garcia Wylie from the Varda Group who helped us to organize this meeting. Arranging the logistics of meetings like this is a complicated juggling act and I want to thank Remi, Kelly and Alex for their hard work in helping to pull this meeting together.
- What I would like to do in these first few minutes is set the stage for what we hope will take place over the next two days.
- Last year Pew hosted a meeting like this one in New York to discuss the problems with the IWC and what if anything could be done about them. The Japanese Government also sponsored a meeting last year here in Tokyo on a similar topic. Both these meetings helped to build a widespread view, held now on all sides of the debate, that the IWC is not working as it should.

- In Anchorage last June, the IWC itself came to the same conclusion, and its commissioners agreed to hold an inter-sessional meeting to discuss the future of the IWC. That meeting will take place in a little over a month. The Chairman of the IWC believes that this is so important to the institution that he intends to devote as much of this year's annual meeting as possible to the discussion of the Commission's future.
- It is often said that the first step to getting somewhere is deciding you are not going to stay where you are. We know there is a need for change in how the IWC ensures the long term conservation of whales. We must now determine if we can find a way forward.
- Our purpose in organizing this meeting is to discuss whether there is a "way forward" -- one that everyone would find acceptable. You might wonder whether the two sides of this debate -- which have been so entrenched and intractable -- could both achieve a successful resolution of their differences. We do too. Is that possible?
- I do not have the precise answer to that question. That is why we are here, and why the IWC intersessional meeting will be held in March. But I am fairly certain that the way forward will not be found by looking back -- by rehashing the debates and disagreements of the past. The world has changed; the oceans have changed; and as the climate warms further, these changes will become more pronounced. The climate for whales must change too, hence the title of this symposium. We need to find a solution that is robust enough to take us forward for the foreseeable future, for another 60 years even if that's not too bold.

- Given the reality of the IWC, it is difficult to envision a solution being found unless there is open discussion and dialogue between the different sides of this debate. In order to make this possible, we are asking that everyone abide by the Chatham House rule – in which we all agree that outside the meeting we will not attribute comments to any individual. We must also remember that participants are representing their own views, and do not necessarily reflect official policies of their organizations or governments.
- So let's get started. Our time together is short. Let's make the most of it.
- I want to take a moment to thank our distinguished Chair for being here and for agreeing to help us all have a productive and constructive dialogue.

The meeting will be chaired by Tuiloma Neroni Slade, former Presiding Judge of the International Criminal Court; previously Ambassador of Samoa to the United Nations; Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and leader in the climate change negotiations; and former Co-Chairman of the United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS).

- Judge Slade has had a distinguished career working to bring people from diverse nations and perspectives together to resolve their differences.
- Judge Slade, welcome and thank you.
- I now pass the floor to Dr. Herath from the United Nations University who is kind enough to welcome us and to provide their excellent meeting facilities here. Dr. Herath, please let me extend our thanks to the UN University for hosting us and to all UN University staff who have helped us resolve all the practical arrangements required to make this symposium a success. For us all it is a great honor to be here. Dr. Herath...