

Whaling Talks in Morocco Fail to Produce Reductions

By David Jolly, June 23, 2010

PARIS — Talks aimed at reducing whaling by Japan, Norway and Iceland collapsed Wednesday, effectively leaving management of whale populations in the hands of the hunters.

After two days of private negotiations, Anthony Liverpool, the acting chairman of the [International Whaling Commission](#), told delegates meeting in Agadir, Morocco, that “fundamental positions remained very much apart,” The Associated Press reported.

Delegates of the commission’s 88 member governments had been discussing whether to maintain a 24-year-old moratorium on commercial whaling. A compromise plan proposed by the United States and other antiwhaling nations would have allowed the three countries to resume commercial whaling but at significantly lower levels and under tight monitoring.

Whaling in Antarctic waters, where Japan hunts hundreds of whales each year under a loophole in the moratorium that permits whaling for scientific research, would also have been sharply curtailed. But delegates said that the parties could not agree on the size of the catch, and that Tokyo had balked at a proposal to eventually phase out the hunt there altogether.

Discussion of the “peace plan,” as it had been called, might be extended for another year, some delegates suggested, and the commission will discuss other matters for a few days more. But with the failure to resolve the most important issue in the talks, the whaling nations will continue using loopholes in the moratorium to set their own quotas. The three whaling nations have caught more than 30,000 whales since the mid-1980s.

“We regret that the I.W.C. failed to reach agreement on a new paradigm that would improve the conservation of whales,” [Monica Medina](#), the United States whale commissioner, said in a statement.

The United States and New Zealand strongly backed a compromise, while Australia and Latin American nations called for a complete end to whaling. Except for Denmark, the 27 [European Union](#) nations oppose the hunt, but officials had said they would consider a compromise.

“It’s very clear that there was nothing approaching a consensus for this proposal,” [Peter Garrett](#), Australia’s environment minister, said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Garrett said the breakdown of the talks reflected “a tussle between those who see the purpose of the commission as being to regulate the killing of whales and those, like Australia, who see a broader purpose of focusing on conservation.”

Australia is suing Japan at the [International Court of Justice](#) to end the hunt in the [Southern Ocean](#), the Antarctic waters that are a major feeding ground for four-fifths of the world’s whales.

The Japanese whaling commissioner, [Yasue Funayama](#), argued that it was the insistence of the antiwhaling countries that no whales be killed that scuttled a deal, The Associated Press reported.

But environmentalists blamed Japan. It has played “the most active role” in heading off marine conservation measures this year, said Susan Lieberman, director of international policy for the Pew Environment Group. She said Japan also helped to defeat [proposals at a United Nations conference](#) in March to safeguard Atlantic bluefin tuna, sharks and coral.

Junichi Sato, the director of [Greenpeace](#) Japan, said in a statement that it was “time for real political action and consequences to be brought to end Japan’s bogus scientific whale hunt in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, and the commercial hunts of Norway and Iceland.”

A spokeswoman for the commission, Jemma Jones, declined to comment.

“I don’t think it’s correct to characterize this meeting as a failure,” said Nicolas Entrup, an observer at the meeting with the [Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society](#). The plan would have allowed commercial whaling to resume, he said, and even if it reduced the overall catch, “it would have been a mistake to give quotas to the countries that have been flouting the moratorium all these years.”