

# SVG unlikely to boycott IWC meeting

Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves has said it is unlikely that St Vincent and the Grenadines will boycott next month's meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), to be held in Morocco.

"I am not into the boycotting business," Dr Gonsalves said.

He made the statement on Tuesday, in response to a question relating to a call for OECS states to boycott the upcoming IWC meeting.

The call for boycott of the IWC meeting was made by environmentalists who attended a recent Ocean Life Symposium in Grenada.

Dr Gonsalves said that St Vincent and the Grenadines is traditionally a whaling nation.

IWC Commissioner Edwin Snagg and Chief Fisheries Officer Raymond Ryan are likely to attend the Morocco meeting.

The call was also made for OECS states not to vote in support of Japan at the IWC meeting.

Dr Gonsalves said that the St Vincent and the Grenadines delegation at the meeting will vote "in a principled way."

Delivering the feature address at the opening of the meeting in Grenada on May 19, 2010, former Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal said "Japan has persisted in chasing down whales long after most of the world decided that it was both morally repugnant and utterly unnecessary for the food it yielded."

He said the Japanese are "not moved by the moral argument and consider meat to be exotic food."

"It is a blot on our global governance that human society in its overwhelming numbers cannot ban this perversity outright and cleanse our civilization of this stain," Ramphal said.

He also expressed concern, "that some of our smallest Caribbean countries join Japan in resisting global prohibitions in the International Whaling Commission."

Sir Shridath further argued that, "our region would better serve the cause of global conservation, as well as our own economic interest, by distancing



L-R: Leslie Pierre (Editor Grenada Voice), Gerry Leape (Pew Environment Group), Mona George-Dill (President - ECCEA), Tilman Thomas (Grenada PM), and Sir Shridath Ramphal (Former Commonwealth Sec Gen)



Grenada PM Tilman Thomas addressing the opening of Symposium



Marlon Mills making a presentation

ourselves from this lingering defilement of the Oceans.

Describing whales as "special jewels in the crown of life," Sir Shridath said they are now endangered, because of industrialized whale hunting by countries such as Japan.

"Throughout his history, man has used the oceans as he

pleased, it has been both highway and harvest ground," Sir Shridath commented.

Prime Minister of Grenada, Tilman Thomas, also addressed the opening of the Ocean Life Symposium on May 19, 2010 at the Grand Beach Resort in Grenada.

In his address, Prime Minister Thomas stressed that, "having a strong environmental preservation policy in place, is a priority for the government of Grenada."

"We believe that the social and economic development of our country and region should be carried out sustainably," PM Thomas said.

Vincitians Marlon Mills and Paul Lewis represented Friends of the Tobago Cays and made presentations during the three-day meeting.

In her presentation, Mills listed some of the marine protected areas in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

She said whaling was traditionally a part of St Vincent's economy, in Barrouallie and Bequia in the Grenadines.

Mills said we no longer need to be whaling, since the economy has now shifted to a tourism-based one.

She said whaling in Bequia is now on a collision course with the tourism industry, since it is felt that the benefits that come from whaling, will not justify the losses they would have in the tourism industry.

Lewis gave an "analysis of the views of fishers on mainland St Vincent, and the Grenadine Islands of Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau and Union Island.

Lewis said there are two crews in Bequia still actively involved in Humpback whaling.

He said, however, that whaling is not very significant to the economy of Bequia.

Lewis noted that whaling has a serious impact on eco-tourism in Bequia because "a lot of people are annoyed that this thing is happening."

The Ocean Life Symposium was held under the theme "Ocean life on the brink."

It was organized by the





L-R: Paul Lewis, Sir Ronald Sanders, Lyne Morissette and Oswaldo Vasquez

## Japan takes a beating at Ocean Life Symposium

Japan was heavily criticized for its commercial whaling, at a recent Ocean Life Symposium which was held in Grenada.

Many of the presenters at the three-day meeting were critical of Japan, for using "check book diplomacy" and getting Caribbean and other small states on their side at the International Whaling Convention.

Former Caribbean Ambassador, Sir Ronald Sanders was a consultant at the Grenada meeting.

In his presentation, Sir Ronald said that commercial whaling by Japan is helping to endanger the mammal.

He said that the population of Humpback whales is now only about 20,000.

"Clearly then, the number of whales slaughtered for commercial purposes or killed by other means is much higher than the estimates of the IWC," Sir Ronald said.

Sir Ronald pointed out that Japan is the "most aggressive" of the whaling countries, and it has "solicited the support of a number of small, and economically vulnerable nations in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific."

The former diplomat further argued that supporting Japan is not in the best interest of these countries.

"They are earning regular annual revenues

and creating employment in whale-watching as part of the tourism industry on which all their economies now depend," Sir Ronald stressed.

He also asked the question "why support whale hunting when whales in the Caribbean Sea are no threat to our food stock?"

Sir Ronald accused Japan of taking advantage of "the economic vulnerabilities of these small economies by offering them aid in the form of Fish Refrigeration Facilities in return for their joining the IWC and voting with Japan."

In his presentation entitled 'The value of whale watching to the East Caribbean', Sir Ronald also accused Japan of paying the IWC membership fees for several Caribbean countries and financing these countries delegations to IWC meetings.

Sir Ronald said that supporting Japan's bid for increased whaling, is not in the interest of these states, which would benefit more from helping to preserve the already depleting whale population.

The Ocean Life Symposium was held at the Grand Beach Resort, Grenada.

It ran from May 19-21, 2010.

The Grenada symposium was organized by The Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness, the Pew Environment Group, the Kido Foundation and the Grenada Fund for Conservation.



Participants who attended the Symposium in Grenada

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