

Japan blasts Australia over whaling ban campaign

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An undated photo released by the Australian Customs Service on February 7, 2008 shows a whale being dragged on board a Japanese ship after being harpooned in Antarctic waters. Japan accused Australia Tuesday of seeking to impose its policy of zero tolerance on whaling in the Antarctic, and told the highest UN court that its own whaling activities were legitimate.

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Japan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Koji Tsuruoka told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague that he was sure Australia was unilaterally trying to push a total ban on whaling, adding: "Australia cannot impose its will onto other nations."

Canberra took Tokyo to court in 2010, saying that more than 10,000 [whales](#) have been killed since 1988 as a result of Japan's JARPA and JARPA II research programmes, allegedly putting the Asian nation in breach of international conventions and its obligation to preserve marine mammals and their environment.

Australia argued before the ICJ that Japan is exploiting a loophole by continuing to hunt whales as scientific research in spite of a 1986 International Whaling Commission (IWC) ban on [commercial whaling](#).

While Norway and Iceland have whaling programmes in spite of the 1986 moratorium, Japan exploits a loophole that allows lethal scientific research, Canberra said. In fact, the [whale meat](#) winds up on dinner tables.

In its application, Australia accuses Japan of breaching its obligation to "observe in good faith the zero catch limit in relation to the killing of whales."

But Tsuruoka insisted Tuesday: "Such whaling is not commercial, but scientific."

The deputy minister said: "Japan has always lived in harmony with nature throughout its history. Surrounded by the sea, Japan would be the last country to make abusive use of whales."

He went on: "We wish to emphasise that the case concerns the legality of Japan's whaling (...) not the evaluation of good or bad science."

"We believe animal protection (...) is an essentially good cause," Tsuruoka declared, adding: "We conduct scientific research in a way that no harm to stocks will occur."

"Men and their cultures perceive animals in different ways," said Tsuruoka, noting that whaling was a highly sensitive subject in Australia.

"We don't criticise other cultures," he said, adding: "If you had to establish the superiority of one culture over another, the world could not live in peace."

Australia made its case before the ICJ from June 26-28 and Japan has the right to reply until Thursday. A second round of arguments is expected, and the judges' decision is not expected for months.

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