

# Japan's whale hunt under scrutiny at IWC meeting

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In this Sept. 11, 2014 photo, chef of the Japanese restaurant "COM FOR TABLE" slices whale meat for a dish in Tokyo. Whale meat continues to be one of the favorite dishes in this restaurant, but restaurant manager concerns about the future of its supply. At the International Whaling Commission meeting in Slovenia which opens Monday, Sept. 15, 2014, Japan is expected to seek international support for its plans to hunt minke whales in the Antarctic Ocean next year by scaling down the whaling research program the U.N. top court rejected earlier this year. The restaurant manager is hoping that supply will continue to sustain the demand for whale meat which has been a staple for the Japanese for such a long time. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

Japan's intention to resume whale hunts in the Antarctic—despite a ruling by the top U.N. court—topped the agenda as an international whaling conference opened Monday in Slovenia's Adriatic Sea resort of Portoroz.

Whaling for research purposes is exempt from the 1986 international ban on [commercial whaling](#) and Japan says it will conduct additional hunts on that basis—which could lead to the killing of hundreds of more [whales](#).

But in March, the International Court of Justice ruled that Japan's program wasn't scientific as it produced little actual research and said Japan failed to explain why it needed to kill so many whales.

Approval from the International Whaling Commission's scientific committee isn't mandatory, but any attempt by Japan to resume whaling in the Antarctic after a one-year pause would likely face intense scrutiny.

The nearly 90 IWC-country members are equally divided into pro-whaling and anti-whaling camps, with Australia leading the opposition to what they say is the killing for commercial purposes—meat and oil production.

Japan is expected to outline a new plan that will pledge a reduced number and types of whales it intends to hunt.

"The content of our new research program will not be so different from our past research activities, which were highly regarded by scientists," said Hideki Moronuki, a spokesman for the Japanese delegation. "The main purpose was always to achieve sustainable use of whale resources."

New Zealand plans a draft resolution at the four-day conference that will uphold the U.N. court's ruling and help ensure that no "illegal permits

for scientific whaling" will be issued. The International Fund for Animal Welfare has urged anti-whaling countries to support the New Zealand resolution.

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