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MEDIA RELEASE
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JOURNALISTS AND EDITORS MISINFORMING THE PUBLIC – AGAIN

Mr. Minoru Morimoto, director General of The Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR) in Tokyo, said today that journalists and editors are misinforming the public and abusing the credibility of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Many of the news articles and stories about Japan's whale research have incorrectly cited the World Conservation Union (IUCN) listing of humpback whales as “vulnerable” and fin whales as “endangered”.

The fact is that the IUCN's website for its “Red List” clearly says that these listings are “out of date”. Both the assessment of these species and the criteria used to classify them are “out of date.” This is because the assessments were done in 1996 and used 1994 criteria which have since been revised. The IUCN has received updated assessments from its expert group but these have not yet been made public or adopted. Mr. Morimoto said that journalists and editors should at a minimum acknowledge this when they cite the IUCN listing of humpback and fin whale or not use them inappropriately.

In a similar way, articles have used the IWC Scientific Committee estimate of 42,000 to say that the current population of humpback whales in the Southern Hemisphere is “around 40,000” but that estimate applies to 1997/1998. With the population growing at 10% per year, (IWC SC estimate for East Australia 1981-96, 12.4% and West Australia 1977-91, 10.9%) it would now be more than 2.5 times what it was at that time and more than 3 times what it was when IUCN did their assessment.

Mr. Morimoto said that it is misleading and confusing to readers to simply quote the IUCN's listing which the IUCN itself says is out of date. He urged journalists and editors not to simply copy the rhetoric of the anti-whaling NGOs but to do their homework and present more precise reporting. Mr. Morimoto reiterated his earlier statement that Japan's research makes a valuable contribution to the management of Antarctic whale species to ensure that any future commercial whaling regime is robust and sustainable and that a take of 50 humpback whales would have no impact on the population or the whale-watching industry.

Web links to IUCN World Conservation Union Red Listing of Humpback and Fin whales (see “annotations” in “Assessment Information”) and the International Whaling Commission website.

Humpback whale: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/13006/all>

Fin whale: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/search/details.php/2478/summ>

IWC population estimates: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/conservation/estimate.htm>

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