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EMBASSY OF JAPAN  
2520 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

November 10, 2010

Dear Mr. Debord

Thank you for your recent letter regarding dolphin fishing in Japan. We do take note of your concern but also would ask you to try to understand that there are diverse cultures in the world, many of which have traditions that are very different to those found in the United States.

Unlike the United States, Japan is a small country with limited land, but with a considerable number of people. A population a little less than half of that of the U.S. lives in an area that is only 4% of that of the U.S. Furthermore, about 70% of the Japanese land is very steep forest not suitable for agricultural development. Therefore, Japanese people traditionally have had no other option than to rely upon various food resources from the ocean and that is why we developed a unique cuisine like sushi. Though not widespread, consuming dolphin meat is also part of local food culture in some coastal areas, such as Tohoku, Izu and Wakayama. The Japanese people have, for centuries, consumed many types of living marine resources but their harvests have been conducted sustainably and the dolphin fishery is no exception; it is carefully managed so as not to deplete the stock.

We understand that you can find it most unpleasant to watch video clips of dolphins being killed for their meat. However, in this day and age, witnessing the killing of cows, pigs and sheep in industrial slaughterhouses would be equally off-putting. Under these circumstances, we would have to commit to consuming animal products respectfully unless you are to give up the consumption of all these products. In Japan, catches of whales and dolphins have been viewed as blessings from the sea and, as such, have been celebrated in our national art. As you know, hundreds of belugas are being hunted in Alaska and we consider that dolphin fishing in Japan and that in the U.S. have reached their current form, merely reflecting the respective social, environmental and economic circumstances.

We do hope that you take the opportunity to further expand your understanding of Japanese culture, which is very different from that of the United States.

Best regards,

Shuya Nakatsuka

First Secretary, Embassy of Japan

Mr. William De Bord

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