

Bridgetown, Barbados, Jan 16 - The Members of the Caribbean Conservation Association present at its 36th Annual General Meeting held in Trinidad voted overwhelmingly in favour of promoting the benefits of non-whaling activities in the Caribbean and in other regions of the globe. However, it was also decided that where whaling is practised on cultural grounds that these activities should be given special consideration vis-a-vis the general principle of anti-whaling.

This decision came as a result of the recognition that the Caribbean region is flooded with information justifying regional and international whaling activities, with the virtual absence of available information and promotional material on the benefits of non-whaling activities, such as the potential for significant revenues generated from whale watching.

Leading this call for the "balancing" of the available information came earlier from the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG) based in Antigua, supported by the St. Lucia Animal Protection Society and echoing the sentiments of many CCA Members. Carole McCauley, Interim Executive Director of the EAG in a request to the CCA has stated "I don't feel, at least from an Antigua perspective, that there has been enough awareness work on the issue. In Antigua, I have seen more pro-whaling (Japanese subsidised) information in the media than anti-whaling. The anti-whaling material that I do encounter is often through environmental networks, which are not accessible to the general public. The EAG does try, as much as possible, to share environmental news with the media, and to generate our own press releases, but this is not enough....The EAG does not have the resources to launch a media campaign to match that of the Japanese lobby, with flashy TV and radio commercials, glossy and full colour teacher resources, etc. And though we could theoretically launch a project of our own to raise funds to do this ourselves, it makes better sense for a regional organisation to carry this on behalf of the numerous regional stakeholders and nations involved. National organizations will certainly participate in the implementation of such a project."

The CCA over the past year has been involved in a process of consultation with its membership to determine its evolving position on whaling. The membership felt that all relevant issues should be considered in deciding on a position including scientific, economic, humane and cultural issues.

Dr Joth Singh, CCA's Executive Director, has noted: "In viewing the generated information, equally persuasive arguments are being presented for both sides of the issue whether based on fact or fiction. What needs to be done is to determine what is fact and what is fiction. However, what currently exists is an imbalance between the tremendous amount of information which is being made available to the Caribbean publics in support of whaling, and the relative absence of information of benefits of adopting a non-whaling position together with the dangers of Caribbean countries supporting a whaling position. The economic repercussions could be tremendous for a region which depends heavily on tourism when one considers that the majority of tourists visiting the Caribbean come from countries which are currently against whaling and that there is a mounting lobby by highly influential internationally active groups against whaling".

Dr. Singh explained that "the vote at the CCA Annual General meeting held in

November reflected the view of the Membership that the CCA had an obligation to the Caribbean public to ensure that they understood the benefits of non-whaling activities such as whale watching and the implications of taking a stance in support of whaling". He added "the CCA will be seeking the support of regional and international development agencies to assist with creating this balance of information with respect to whaling".

The last official position of the CCA on the whaling issue before this current position, was presented at the 51st International Whaling Commission meeting held in Grenada during 1999, when the official statement made by the CCA included that "until proven to be biologically sustainable, economically viable, culturally relevant and politically acceptable within the principles of sustainable development, the CCA opposes any whaling in the Caribbean".

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