

**Whaling Foes say Support for Hunting Could Backfire
The Caribbean nations that helped Japan end a 20-year moratorium
are told tourism may suffer.**

By Carol J. Williams, Times Staff Writer
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FRIGATE BAY, St. Kitts and Nevis — Six Caribbean states that support Japan's drive to resume commercial whaling are highly dependent on tourism and could suffer boycotts or lost business as a result of their vote, environmentalists and tourism promoters said Monday.

A day after Japan mustered the first International Whaling Commission vote in support of ending a 20-year moratorium on hunting, countries that oppose the killing cautioned the small islands that their most vital industry could feel the sting of angry whale lovers.

"People come to this region to see nature at its best," Joth Singh, director of wildlife and habitat for the International Fund for Animal Welfare, said of vacationers drawn to the Caribbean's pristine beaches and lush volcanic mountains. "Individuals for whom whaling is abhorrent will think twice about going to a destination where their values are not shared."

The pro-whaling island states, beneficiaries of more than \$100 million in Japanese aid over the last eight years, have argued throughout the annual meeting that whale hunting and whale watching can coexist. They express little concern that backing Tokyo's campaign to overturn the whaling ban could hurt their image as eco-tourist destinations.

All six Caribbean island members of the IWC — Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines — voted Sunday for a declaration deeming the whaling ban "no longer necessary." The declaration passed, 33-32.

Japan appeared reluctant Monday to test its slender majority. Japanese delegate Joji Morishita said that in the interest of avoiding further polarization, he had decided against calling for a vote on eliminating the commission's conservation committee, which the pro-whaling bloc considers a distraction from what it says is the organization's main work of managing the hunt.

Tokyo also backed off a threat to strip Greenpeace of its observer status. The group's protest ship Arctic Sunrise and a Japanese whaler collided in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary in January.

Australian and British delegates hinted that countries that endorsed whale hunting might face a tourism boycott. "There can be a backlash by British consumers," said Britain's environment minister, Ben Bradshaw.

An American observer agreed. "Americans feel very strongly about their love for the whales, and I wouldn't be surprised if they decided not to see their money go to countries that support a return to commercial whaling," said Danielle Grabel, a Los Angeles native who campaigns for the Environmental Investigation Agency, which is monitoring the whaling meeting.

"We have heard these threats before, but we will not cower," responded St. Lucia's fisheries chief, Ignatius Jean.

Dominica, one of Tokyo's most vocal allies, could have the most at risk. With few sandy beaches, it markets itself as an ecological paradise and appeals mostly to outdoor enthusiasts. The Dominica Hotel and Tourism Assn. appealed on the eve of the IWC meeting for Caribbean governments to abandon pro-whaling positions and to propose a new regional whale sanctuary to promote the fast-growing pastime of whale watching.

The nascent whale watching industry adds \$10 million a year to the islands' economies and has helped coastal communities replace lost agricultural jobs, said Madeleine Jouye de Grandmaison, a Martinique official with the French delegation to the IWC meeting.

"Our populations are not in favor of whaling. It's not part of our culture. It's not part of our economy," she said.

The six Caribbean members of the IWC are home to fewer than 600,000 people and are all dependent on tourism for as much as 80% of their economy.

Although there is some sentiment in the islands that whaling could threaten tourism, Japan's allies on the IWC, such as Antigua and Barbuda, dismiss the issue as artificially inspired by environmentalists and media.

"We are accused of selling our votes and prostituting our sovereignty, but as sovereign states we take great offense to this," said Joanne Massiah, Antigua and Barbuda's minister of food production and marine resources.

During a debate Monday on whale-killing methods and hunters' desire to shorten the time between the harpooning of an animal and its death, Massiah said whaling countries were committed to reducing suffering. However, she said that she thought "the term 'humane killing' was an oxymoron."

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