

# Japan, whaling allies block proposal for South Atlantic sanctuary

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-26/japan-allies-block-proposal-for-south-atlantic-whale-sanctuary/7965288>

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**Photo:** [The proposal was brought forward by African and South American countries.](#) (Flickr: Jolene Bertoldi)

Countries led by Japan have blocked a move to create a South Atlantic whale sanctuary, which supporters say are endangered despite a three-decade moratorium on hunting.

The proposal brought by five African and South American countries would have needed the support of three quarters of the International Whaling Commission's 88 members.

In the event, 24 countries were opposed, including Japan.

Japan is one of a handful of countries including Norway and Iceland that continue to hunt whales by making use of a loophole in the moratorium allowing the practice of "scientific whaling", where carcasses are examined before the meat, prized by many Japanese as a delicacy, is eaten.

Japan says the point of examining the carcasses is to determine the age of dead whales so as to increase awareness of what is needed to help preserve "sustainable" whale numbers.

Japanese envoy Joji Morishita said the IWC remained split between a majority backing a total whaling ban and countries "supporting sustainable utilisation".

"Unless we solve this issue, or find a way out of this stalemate, no issue will be actually discussed in a constructive manner," Mr Morishita said.

## Countries call for tightening of 'scientific' loophole

**Photo:** [Japanese whaling harpoon ship the Yushin Maru 2 with a minke whale in the Southern Ocean on February 15, 2015.](#) (Supplied: Glenn Lockitch/Sea Shepherd)

Pro-sanctuary countries says "sustainable utilisation" is not good enough to protect endangered whale species.

"Brazil does not accept the practice [of scientific whaling]. The [loophole] should not be there at all," Hermano Telles Ribeiro, the IWC envoy for Brazil said after the vote at the meeting held in a Slovenian seaside resort.

Mr Ribeiro said it was high time to tighten the 70-year-old International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.

"We are [now] 70 years beyond, so let's engage in conversations and see ... if there is common ground for the governance of the IWC."

The moratorium was introduced at the urging of environmentalists to preserve dwindling whale stocks in the world's oceans.

The sanctuaries improved protection of whales from pollution and entanglement in fishing nets.

Scientists estimate that some 300,000 whales and dolphins die annually after being accidentally caught in fishing gear.

