

REPORT OF THE INTERSESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE GROUP ON NOISE

Submitted by the Government of Argentina on behalf of the International Whaling Commission's Intersessional Correspondence Group on Noise

Background

The growth of human activities had resulted in increased underwater noise in many parts of the ocean, which cause potential social, economic and environmental impact.

The 66 IWC adopted the Conservation Committee (CC) Strategic Plan 2016-2026 (IWC/66/CC08) and the Work Plan for the Intersessional Period 2016-20 (IWC/66/CC21) which included in its priorities anthropogenic sound. It was also agreed that the CC collaborates with range states, the Scientific Committee (SC) and regional and international bodies to address this issue. At the meeting of the Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) in 2018 a small intersessional working group was established to consider, and propose initial steps in articulating and progressing work on noise under the Conservation Committees Strategic Plan and Work Plan. Argentina and Brazil submitted a document on progressing the work of the IWC on the impacts of marine noise on cetaceans (IWC/67/CC/14), which was adopted, and included the terms of reference of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Noise (Annex A).

At the 68a IWC SC was agreed to conduct a pre-meeting on noise at SC68b. The following number of topics were suggested:

- Review approaches to setting noise thresholds and targets relevant to cetaceans. This would include work within NOAA, OSPAR, HELCOM and TG Noise (European Commission). All of these distinguish between approaches for ambient noise and impulsive noise. The pre-meeting may wish to consider these separately as well.
- Review the SC endorsed target of reducing shipping noise by 3dB in 10 years and 10dB in 30 years with respect to:
 - o Work on soundscape modelling and noise budgets at different spatial scales
 - o On noise reduction by individual vessels i.e. assessing how individual noise reductions can contribute to the overall target
 - o Communicating and explaining the target
- Review studies of the contribution of small (recreational, fishing and whale watching) vessels to coastal soundscapes, including (a) assessments of exposure of coastal populations (b) ways to limit exposure through technical or operational measures (e.g. including in whale watching guidelines)

- Collaboration with the Conservation Committee and their work item on noise. The pre-meeting could identify topics where the SC could contribute for specific sources including seismic, sonar, pile driving and ADDs, in addition to shipping noise and work related to IMO.
- Collaboration with IMO MEPC and work on shipping noise

The intersessional steering group will investigate the option to hold the pre-meeting in London at the IMO. This could allow some participation by IMO Secretariat and other shipping interests.

Finally, the IWC SC encourages ‘activity exclusion’ as an effective mitigation approach, particularly to alleviate the effect of noise on cetaceans.

In order to progress the work of the IWC, integrate knowledge, exchange opinions and coordinate among multiple stakeholders and competent agencies, Argentina would like to host a workshop during 2020 to support deliver ToR 1 and 2 (Annex A). See more details in Annex B.

Timeline

19 July 2019. Presentation of the report of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Noise.

May 2020. Pre-meeting on noise at SC68b (Cambridge, UK)

September or October 2020. Workshop proposal to develop work on noise at the Conservation Committee’s Strategic and Work Plans (Argentina).

Annex A

Terms of Reference of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Noise

1. Develop a costed programme of work on noise within the IWC to underpin delivery of the Conservation Committees Strategic Plan.
2. Elaborate and develop key themes and objectives for inclusion in the Conservation Committees Work Plan.
3. Develop and organise a workshop (subject to available funds), to be held in 2019, to support delivery of ToR 1 and 2.
4. Ensure the advice of the Scientific Committee and other IWC subsidiaries bodies is incorporated into the considerations of the Conservation Committee.
5. Explore engagement with other organisations to jointly advance this work such as the United Nations General Assembly, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its related bodies.
6. Submit a report of the workshop and progress at IWC68

Annex B

Workshop proposal to develop work on noise at the Conservation Committee's Strategic and Work Plans.

Potential topics

- Specific sources of anthropogenic noise
 - * seismic exploration
 - *sonar,
 - *pile driving
 - *ADDs,
 - *shipping noise (vessel noise in general).
- IWC
 - *Previous work done on noise by the IWC
 - *Report of the pre-meeting on noise at IWC 68B
- Other International or regional Conventions working on noise
 - *IMO
 - *CMS
 - *Regional Conventions
- Develop the IWC programme on noise
 - *Research
 - *Monitor
 - *Mitigation
 - *Public Awareness
 - *Communication
- Explore the best way to coordinate the work of the IWC with other international and regional bodies.