

International Whaling Commission Virtual Special Session 8-10 September 2021

NEW ZEALAND – National Statement

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa
Greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand

New Zealand thanks the Chair, Vice Chair, the Executive Secretary and the Secretariat for their work in preparing for and hosting this Virtual Special Meeting.

New Zealand remains strongly committed to supporting the work of the Commission. We acknowledge the challenging circumstances over the past months, due to the ongoing pandemic which has necessitated the deferral of IWC 68 until 2022. We commend the Commission for its flexibility and innovation to ensure the important work for the conservation and management of whales continues apace.

In its 75th year, the IWC has shown its resilience.

New Zealand acknowledges that this Virtual Special Session will be focused on a limited agenda to take us through to IWC 68, including the bridging budget. We look forward to IWC 68, when we will again have full discussions across the wide range of issues and initiatives within the IWC community. As the world emerges from the pandemic, New Zealand believes it will be more important than ever to harness the new ways of working and thinking and apply them to our work in the Commission.

New Zealand believes that the strength of the Commission lies in its evolution, and new approaches will be needed to counter new threats to whale and dolphin populations, particularly as oceans warm and acidify. We now know so much more about the contribution of whale and dolphin populations to healthy oceans and productive ecosystems, and this area of work is one New Zealand supports.

New Zealand wishes to specifically recognise the role of the Executive Secretary over this challenging pandemic period, in leading the Secretariat through lockdowns and uncertainty while ensuring the work programme continues. New Zealand congratulates the Executive Secretary on the two-year extension of her term.

In particular, New Zealand has been pleased to note the outreach initiatives of the Secretariat to other regional and multilateral agencies. No international organisation can, or should, stand alone in today's interconnected world. Collaboration across scientific, conservation and management platforms, with Governments, multilateral fora and civil society, enrich and inform the work of the Commission.

New Zealand welcomed recent engagement in our region – the Pacific – with participation in the inaugural meeting between the Secretariats of the IWC and the Pacific Regional

Environment Programme (SPREP). These linkages support work underway in the Pacific to address the many threats to whale and dolphin populations, including entanglement in active or abandoned fishing gear, by-catch, ship strikes, marine pollution and climate change.

New Zealand is proud of its long history of working for the conservation of cetaceans. In the period since our last full Commission meeting, New Zealand has provided a further voluntary contribution to the important By-catch Mitigation Initiative. Our contribution will be focused on the IWC work with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to help find solutions in those fisheries where bycatch is occurring.

New Zealand has also provided recent support for the promotion of the IWC Whale Watching Handbook – a useful resource for operators and the economic tourism sector as it recovers post-pandemic. This funding has also been directed to the development of a pilot database for National Voluntary Conservation Reports, to enable easy access and dissemination of data on conservation initiatives across the membership, and we look forward to the launch of the database.

New Zealand would like to take this opportunity to record our strong support for the IWC Reform process. We encourage members to engage with the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness, in which New Zealand has been pleased to be a part. This is designed to be an inclusive process. New Zealand's aim is to work towards a modern, fit for purpose, financially strong organisation that will take forward the management and conservation strategies for cetaceans, ensure healthy whale and dolphin populations, and build towards healthy oceans. That is where New Zealand sees the future.

Thank you and kia ora.