

Opening statement by the members of the Buenos Aires Group (BAG; Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic)

COURTESY UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

### **XIV Meeting of the Buenos Aires Group**

THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE BUENOS AIRES GROUP MET TO DISCUSS ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST IN VIEW OF THE NEXT VIRTUAL SPECIAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION AND TO PROMOTE COOPERATION IN CETACEAN CONSERVATION.

Representatives of the Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru, member countries of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and members of the so-called Buenos Aires Group (GBA), met remotely on 25 and 26 August 2021, to exchange views, agree on positions and coordinate their action in view of the next virtual special meeting of the IWC, to be held between 8 and 10 September 2021.

In the framework of the strategy agreed by the GBA during the session, as well as reflected in the Florianópolis Declaration adopted by the IWC in 2018 (Resolution 2018-5), the representatives of the GBA States present agreed to:

1. Reaffirm the commitment of the GBA to the International Whaling Commission as the main international forum for the conservation and management of cetaceans and to celebrate its 75 years of existence;
2. Reiterate the commitment to the moratorium on commercial whaling. In this sense, the GBA celebrates 35 years of a measure that constitutes a milestone in the history of world conservationism, and reiterates its determined opposition to trade, mainly international trade, in cetaceans and their derivatives, to the so-called "scientific" whaling and to whaling under reservation or objection to the moratorium;
3. Reiterate the firm commitment of the GBA to non-lethal and non-extractive research and use of cetaceans, through the promotion of responsible whale watching tourism;
4. Demand respect for the integrity of the Whale Sanctuaries already established by the International Whaling Commission and to support the creation of new sanctuaries, both nationally and within the framework of the IWC, as a very important management policy to guarantee the conservation of cetaceans. In this respect, the GBA countries give their full support to the proposal for the creation of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary and its Management Plan;
5. Recognize the environmental, economic and social relevance of live cetaceans, highlighting their contribution to face the crisis of biodiversity loss and their special role in mitigating the effects of climate change;
6. Reject initiatives to use cetaceans to mitigate the food crisis;

7. Highlight in particular the importance of the contribution of cetaceans to the functioning of aquatic ecosystems and to congratulate the work done by the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee to move forward on this issue;
8. Recognize the evolution of the mandate of the IWC in its 75 years of existence and the urgent need to make progress in the recognition of the non-lethal and non-extractive use of cetaceans as the only viable alternative in the 21st century, without prejudice to their sustainable and regulated use for local aboriginal subsistence consumption, as well as the urgent need to balance the time and budget allocated by the Commission to issues of interest to most members, in congruence with the Florianópolis Declaration adopted in 2018;
9. Emphasize the need for the applications for future quotas and the catches of current whales for aboriginal subsistence whaling to adequately comply with the requirements established by the IWC and to avoid the submission of package proposals in any future quota applications;
10. Recognize the importance of deepening the IWC's work on its role in cetacean conservation and management in the 21st century and the need to align its activities with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategic Plan and its 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature, the Implementation Plan for the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development, as well as in other relevant international fora;
11. Recognize the work of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness in considering the recommendations arising from the Report of the Independent Review Panel (IWC67/18) for governance reform and updating of the IWC and reiterate its support to the discussions held in order to reach agreements;
12. Continue to deepen cooperation among GBA members to implement the conservation agenda at national and regional levels, and to promote it within the framework of the IWC. This agenda includes environmental issues such as climate change, strandings, fishing gear disentanglement, bycatch, habitat degradation, ship strikes, marine debris, emerging diseases, chemical and noise pollution and other threats;
13. Highlight and support the discussions and work of the Scientific Committee, regarding the intricate relationship between humans, animals and ecosystems that become more relevant in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to integrate the ONE HEALTH concept and its multidisciplinary approach into the work of the Scientific Committee;
14. Strengthen scientific research on contingent issues such as the emergence of zoonotic diseases in cetaceans;
15. Support the governments involved in the formulation and implementation of Conservation Management Plans for various species in Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, the GBA countries express their full support to the proposals for Conservation Management Plans for South American river dolphins and humpback whales of the Central American population in the North Pacific;

16. Acknowledge the efforts made by Mexico to prevent the extinction of the Vaquita and to especially highlight the conclusion of the Agreement of 24 September 2020 to eliminate gillnets and entangling nets throughout the Vaquita's range, as well as the establishment of the Zero Tolerance Area (ATC). The GBA calls upon the Government of Mexico to use all the resources at its disposal to prevent the extinction of the Vaquita and offer their expertise and support to join its efforts;
17. Highlight the hard work carried out by the IWC, the Secretariat of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies to continue their work in the adverse context caused by the COVID-19 emergency;
18. Recognize the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the financial situation of the IWC Member States, trying to make the greatest possible efforts to overcome this difficult situation, and to express concern for the delicate financial situation of the IWC, stressing the need to identify new sources of funding and modalities for fund-raising;
19. Reiterate the recognition of the importance of the active participation of civil society in non-lethal research and cetacean conservation issues and to continue working on joint and concrete actions to strengthen their participation in the various bodies of the IWC;
20. Thank the Government of the Argentine Republic for its outstanding participation and work as a member of the Bureau;
21. Thank and congratulate the Government of Mexico for its role as Chair of the Conservation Committee and to wish the Government of Brazil every success during its tenure as Chair of the Scientific Committee;
22. Thank the Government of the Republic of Chile and the Centro de Conservación Cetácea de Chile for the organization of this meeting and for their contributions to the strengthening of the Buenos Aires Group.

26 August 2021