

Palau's Opening Statement
68th Meeting
International Whaling Commission

We would like first to offer our heartfelt congratulations to the Chairman of the Commission and the Secretariat for the excellent work done for the Contracting Governments over the last four (4) years. You truly deserve our recognition for your unselfish effort during this unprecedented period. We also acknowledge the challenges of budgetary constraints, faced through these years in planning, organizing and convening meetings to discuss matters affecting stakeholders in preparation for this Meeting.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and her people for the warm welcome and the hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in this culturally rich and beautiful country. We hope to find some free time to enjoy the scenic heritage of the country.

It would be remiss of Palau's Delegation, if we do not express our profound appreciation to the Secretariat and the Donor Governments and organizations for supporting our participation in the IWC68 through the Voluntary Assistance Fund of the Commission. Our participation in this very important meeting of this august body would not have been possible without the financial support.

We note the very extensive agenda items for consideration by the IWC68, and therefore, we thank the Chairs and Members of the various Committees, Sub-Committees, and Working Groups that have worked diligently over the years to address critical issues raised by the Contracting Governments.

We are fully committed to work, in genuine spirit of cooperation and compromise, with everyone in this Meeting with the aim of achieving consensus on resolution of critical issues related to the long term interest of the IWC for promoting sustainable use and wise management of the whale resources, in accordance with the mandate of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). We firmly believe that in pursuit of this general goal it would be possible to arrive at appropriate structural and budgetary reforms, with strategic plans that would address the goals and objectives of IWC.

Palau is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), and we depend on our natural marine environment and its resources for our cultural, social and economic advancement. And

therefore, we wish to reiterate that our national objective is to promote and support, with friends and partners, balanced research and development for environmental sustainability and sustainable use of all marine resources for our very livelihood, based on the best available scientific information.

We wish the Meeting a successful deliberation.