

Opening Statement
68 th Meeting of Parties, Portoroz, Slovenia
International Whaling Commission
Republic of Costa Rica

Costa Rica thanks the Government and People of Slovenia for their kind hospitality in the beautiful port of Portoroz. We are sure that the advances achieved at this meeting will constitute a positive milestone for the International Whaling Commission and for the conservation of cetaceans worldwide.

For Costa Rica, the International Whaling Commission continues to be the most important international forum for dealing with cetacean conservation issues. Under the context of the IWC, the sighting of cetaceans in our country has achieved that many coastal communities have improved their quality of life thanks to the non-lethal activity of cetaceans. In addition, thanks to technical recommendations generated from the IWC working groups in the last 15 years, our country has strengthened regulations for safe sighting of cetaceans and visitors.

Costa Rica has been making a particular effort regarding the monitoring of cetaceans in its protected areas. Since 2017, there has been a monitoring protocol for aquatic mammals that is systematically applied in coastal and oceanic protected areas such as Cocos Island National Park. Protected areas have an internal management mechanism that allows them to make decisions regarding the data released regarding cetaceans. However, we still have a long way to go to strengthen controls in the field and this implies technology transfer and capacity building.

In addition to the work with cetaceans in coastal protected areas, Costa Rica is co-leading the Coalition for High Ambition HAC 30X30 in the negotiations of the Post 2020 Strategic Plan in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. And it has increased its protected marine area by 30.2%, which represents at least 10 times the land territory of the country, we are sure that this expansion will favor the populations of whales and other cetaceans that use the oceanic habitat as a habitat for its life cycle.

Efforts to conserve biodiversity, and specifically cetaceans, must be carried out consistently in all international forums, since none of the conventions alone will be able to put an end to the environmental crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change. Whales play an essential role in the oceans, therefore it is of the utmost importance to conserve their populations.

Finally, Costa Rica reiterates its support for the moratorium on whaling, South Atlantic Sanctuary and the non-lethal use of these wonderful beings with whom we share this Earth.