

**SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT OPENING STATEMENT TO THE 68th MEETING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION**

The Solomon Islands Government (SIG) wishes to register our utmost appreciation to the Government of Slovenia for hosting the 68th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC68) in this beautiful city of Portorož. We also appreciate the hard-working staff of the IWC Secretariat for their tremendous arrangements towards making this meeting conceivable.

While we are pleased that IWC68 is being held face to face for the first time in four years, Solomon Islands has taken its fair toll of the negative impacts of COVID19 pandemic, the current economic crisis, energy crisis and food security issues we all face together globally.

We recognise the financial issues that the IWC Secretariat is facing and Solomon Islands is also facing the same which, has resulted in our outstanding contribution arrears over the past four years. These outstanding arrears will have direct implication to our voting rights during this IWC68 meeting. We hope that proposals and amendments to the schedules and draft resolutions the are proposed would reach consensus without having to vote.

As a small developing state but, big ocean state, Solomon Islands continue to depend heavily on our ocean resources and fisheries to sustain our country's economy, our peoples' food security, livelihoods and cultural obligations. As such, SIG strongly supports the draft resolution on Food Security. We stand to believe that our resiliency in all aspects, especially in these uncertain times, will depend on our well-managed ecological and sustainable utilization of our ocean resources and fisheries.

With this in view, SIG also expresses our support to the draft Resolution on "Implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks Aimed at Lifting the Moratorium and the Orderly Development of the Whaling Industry" based on appropriate scientific advice. On the contrary, SIG opposes the proposal on establishing the South Atlantic whale sanctuary. For some parts of Solomon Islands, traditional hunting of dolphins for their teeth and meat is important and this shows the strong traditional and cultural linkages we display as ocean people. We ensure that these important traditional practices are regulated and protected through our current fisheries legislation frameworks. In this juncture, SIG welcomes any future studies by the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee to be conducted in Solomon Islands to support monitoring and data collection on our traditional practises.

SIG also supports the draft Resolution on "Marine Pollution by Plastics" as we believe that by protecting our ocean from any pollution, provides clean habitats and long-term sustainability of our ocean resources and fisheries that our people will benefit from now and into the future.

SIG is looking forward to a fruitful week of discussion this week. Tagio tumas.