

**Opening Statement for  
68th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission**  
Portoroz, Slovenia  
17-21 October 2022  
Submitted by the United States of America

The United States is pleased to be back in Portoroz, Slovenia to participate in the 68<sup>th</sup> meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). We are grateful to the government of Slovenia for its generous hospitality and for all its work, along with the Secretariat, to provide excellent meeting facilities so that we might have a successful and productive IWC68.

This meeting has a full agenda, with the review of the reforms proposed by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness, as well as one schedule amendment, three resolutions for consideration, a budget for the next biennium, and the other work that the Commission must review. In order to accomplish all we set out to do, we encourage all of our colleagues to participate in the meeting with a spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and achieving consensus, starting with the consideration of a proposal to address voting rights of contracting governments.

The United States views the reforms proposed by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness as a means to bolster the effectiveness of the IWC as the preeminent international organization for cetacean science and conservation and whaling management. We hope to work with other contracting governments to achieve consensus adoption of the proposals that restructure the Commission and provide a strategy for the budget reform to ensure that sound fiscal approaches are used to secure the Commission's long-term financial health.

The United States is very concerned with the financial health of the IWC. It is critical that the Commission pass a balanced budget at this meeting. The United States believes the Commission is stronger if it passes its budget decisions by consensus. In light of the challenging budget discussions at IWC68, it is critical for the Commission to continue to support funding for the essential work of the Scientific Committee. In particular, the United States wants to ensure that the scientific support to the Commission on aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW), and the funding of this scientific support from the General Fund, remains a top priority for this Commission. ASW is the only whaling managed by the IWC, and ASW communities depend on these hunts to meet nutritional and cultural needs. The Commission needs to continue to ensure it has the best scientific advice from the scientific committee when considering these hunts.

The United States recognizes the importance of international efforts to reduce and address the harmful effects of plastic pollution on marine ecosystem health, and particularly, large cetaceans. We find the proposed resolution on marine plastic pollution to be timely as the increase in such pollution is of increasing concern for marine resources, including cetaceans, and hope that it can be adopted at this meeting.

The United States continues to view the moratorium on commercial whaling as a necessary conservation measure and again supports the establishment of a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. We urge other IWC members to support this proposal. The Sanctuary will provide range states with important new opportunities to advance whale conservation through outreach and education, as well as a means for the

international cooperation necessary for effective scientific research, conservation, and management of cetaceans.

We thank the Commission for its implementation of the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and look forward to the continuation of that work through this intersessional period. We have also taken steps to reduce the threat of ship strikes, including operational measures for vessels, education and outreach programs, technological and other research, and monitoring activities. In addition, the United States has a long history in promoting responsible whale watching and has served as Chair of the Standing Working Group on Whale Watching. We thank the Commission for its promotion of the online Whale Watching Handbook.

The United States continues to promote the role of the IWC in leading scientific research on cetaceans and in addressing major causes of mortality for cetaceans. We also continue to support the management of ASW by the Commission, with the prioritization within the Scientific Committee in providing the relevant advice for such whaling. We also continue to support the participation of whaling communities in the work of the Commission to ensure that the ASW hunts can continue in perpetuity.

While we have much to accomplish in Portoroz, it is imperative that the Commission continue to focus its attention on existing and emerging threats to cetaceans. The United States looks forward to working together with colleagues to address these many pressing concerns for consideration by the Commission; a cooperative atmosphere is essential to achieving our shared goals.