



**Opening Statement of the Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas (ICB) to the
68th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
Portoroz, Eslovenia**

The Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas is a civil society organization based in Argentina, which for more than five decades and in cooperation with various organizations and institutions, carries out scientific research projects, contributing to generate the essential knowledge to monitor changes in the health status of whales, identify potential threats and thus contribute to more effective strategies for their conservation and their environment.

It is on the basis of this experience that we address the International Whaling Commission, in its first in-person meeting after the Covid19 pandemic, to call on member states to continue working on the principles set out by the Florianópolis Declaration. Its adoption, in 2018, represents an important achievement, not only for the effective conservation of cetaceans in the 21st Century, but also for the evolution of this international forum towards non-extractive and non-lethal use of cetaceans.

This new reality that we are living after the pandemic, although its serious social, health and economic impacts, gave us a unique opportunity to reconsider the current development model and identify ways towards a progress oriented to the restoration of species and ecosystems, which, as a whole, are key to provide Nature Based Solutions. All of the above justifies the opposition of any proposal aimed at weakening the conservation of cetaceans, since science has demonstrated their key role in the proper functioning of ecosystems, being great allies to sustain ocean productivity and mitigate the effects of the climate crisis.

Additionally, live cetaceans are an important resource for coastal communities that use them in a non-lethal and non-extractive way through responsible whale watching, being this activity an important generator of jobs in hundreds of countries around the world and reactivating the economy of communities that were affected by the pandemic.

Having said all this, from the Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas, request the IWC delegates that in this meeting to make their best efforts to collectively overcome the crisis generated by the pandemic to continue moving to a new paradigm that recognizes the immense value of their services that are key to ensure the welfare and survival of all species that inhabit this planet. This should be the vision that guides their future work.



In this sense, we reiterate the importance of protecting the continuity of the moratorium on commercial whaling by:

- Rejecting the proposed resolutions on the Implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks aimed at the lifting of the moratorium and the orderly Development of the Whaling Industry (IWC/68/8.3/01) and food security (IWC/68/8.2/01).
- Supporting the conservation proposals and measures aimed at addressing current environmental and biodiversity challenges, such as the proposed resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution (IWC/68/8.1/01) and the establishment of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (IWC/68/7.1/01).

Finally, we would like to emphasize that although it is important to achieve a structure for the commission that will make its work more effective and with lower costs, but in no way should this be achieved by making adjustments in the budget of the scientific committee or in the conservation committee, which have a fundamental role in addressing the actions necessary to mitigate the multiple anthropogenic threats faced by whales. In reference to the possible reforms of the structure and governance, we urge countries to reject the creation of a management committee that will address more hunts than aboriginal subsistence whaling, which is the only category of whaling authorized under the moratorium

We conclude by thanking the Slovenian government for its hospitality in hosting this 68th meeting. Meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

