

Statement by INDIA at the 68th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission held in Portoroz, Slovenia from 13th-21st October 2022

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of India, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Secretariat of the International Whaling Commission for hosting the 68th biennial meeting in this picturesque and vibrant city of Portoroz.

India has been a member of the International Whaling Commission since 1981 and supports the aims and objectives of the Commission, and stands strongly against whaling for commercial purposes, this is especially crucial at a time where world over endangered species populations are declining. It would be in the interest of conservation that the nations come forward to accrue economic benefits through more compelling and sustainable means like whale watching tourism rather than unsustainable killing. IWC should work systematically to reduce the dependence of aboriginal communities on whales by encouraging member nations to ensure food security through alternate livelihood means.

India is especially appreciative of the work carried out by all the sub committies, with special mention to the Scientific and Conservation Committees, where focus has been brought to tackling issues regarding ecological connectivity and its scientific understanding, health, bycatch mitigation, and marine plastic debris.

India reiterates its commitment to these issues and is demonstrated through the announcement of Project Dolphin, by our Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, where the well-being of not only marine and riverine cetaceans, but the native communities whose livelihoods are

dependent on aquatic habitats will be taken care of in a sustainable holistic manner. Demonstrably, India has conducted the first ever range-wide estimation of Ganges and Indus river dolphins in India. India has also declared its first marine mammal conservation reserve, with a focus on Dugongs, and this step will go a long way in creating a safe haven for marine mammals in India's coastal waters. India has also taken considerable action to reduce marine plastic pollution by banning the use of single-use plastics across the country and the use of microbeads in the cosmetic industry. The government of India is committed to obtaining scientifically robust solutions for conservation of biodiversity, through its sustained efforts on scientific research and management.

Mr. Chairman, India would also like to place on record its highest appreciation to the Secretariat of the International Whaling Commission, which has been playing a pivotal role in bringing all the stakeholders and Contracting Governments to one platform through negotiations and conducting the proceedings in a very effective and congenial manner.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Whaling Commissioner for India for the 68th Meeting.