

IWC/68/OS/NGO/WDC Plenary Agenda item 1.2

68th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission - Portorož, Slovenia

17-21 October 2022

Opening Statement - Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)

WDC reaffirms its commitment to the International Whaling Commission as the main international forum for the conservation and management of cetaceans and reiterates its agreement with the validity and the importance of the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Over the past decades, the IWC has evolved significantly from a primarily regulatory body to one that necessarily develops management, conservation and welfare measures affecting all cetaceans.

WDC is proud to recognise its involvement with the work of the IWC for more than 30 years. During all these years WDC has taken part in discussions about the RMS, RMP, the recognition of the importance of the protection of small cetaceans at the IWC, the creation of the Conservation Committee, and many others.

One of our main challenges today is the endorsement and recognition of cetaceans and their central role in ecosystem functioning and the provision of ecosystem services. The IWC community must continue to develop the science to enable robust quantification of their role, and to inform socio-economic valuations of the critical role whales and dolphins play in the ocean ecosystem. We urgently need to work on the mitigation of the impacts of the climate crisis, biodiversity crisis and other anthropogenic threats to cetaceans, and the wider marine environment, to ensure the positive benefits cetaceans bring are not further eroded.

WDC supports:

- The Working Group on Operational Effectiveness. WDC engages in this work stream to ensure that the IWC working arrangements meet international best practice and are fit for purpose. In principle we support the budget reform strategy (FA/68/4.1.2/01) and the proposed IWC Strategic Principles and term of reference for the Working Group on a Strategic Plan (IWC/68/4.1.2/04). However, WDC has some concerns about the governance reform proposals (FA/68/4.1.2/02), especially on the proposed creation of a Management Committee. WDC does not believe the terms of reference are clear enough to take into account issues like animal welfare, whale watching and whale sanctuaries. WDC considers these to be extremely important issue to be addressed when creating any relevant, and fit for purpose, management scheme.
- WDC supports the Schedule Amendment to Create a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (IWC/68/7.1/01). This is consistent with the IWC's 2018 Florianopolis Declaration. We strongly supported the Florianopolis Declaration, and we continue to do so, as it addresses and reflects WDCs overarching views and principles.
- WDC supports the adoption of the Resolution on Marine Plastic (IWC/68/8.1/01). Plastic is a major global threat to cetaceans, marine ecosystems, and global biodiversity, and we recall the adopted UN Environment Assembly Resolution (UNEP/EA.5/Res. 14), which calls for the development of an international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

WDC strongly opposes:

- The Resolution for the Implementation of a Conservation and Management Programme for Whale Stocks aimed towards the lifting of the moratorium and the orderly Development of the Whaling Industry (IWC/68/8.3/01). Given the multitude of other anthropogenic threats, there isn't any whale species or population that can be considered 'abundant enough' to sustain commercial whaling operations. History has shown that commercial whaling was not, is not and never will be, sustainably managed.
- The Resolution on Food Security (IWC/68/8.2/01). IWC is not the forum where this issue should be discussed as it exceeds the scope of ICRW. Food security should be addressed within the competent authorities such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

WDC stresses that cetaceans are not only under pressure from whaling operations, but they face increasingly daily challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and other burgeoning anthropogenic threats to cetaceans and the wider marine environment.

WDC wishes to highlight the efforts made by the Secretariat of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies to continue their work in the context of the COVID-19 emergency and recognises the impact the pandemic has had on the financial situation.

We wish all participants a successful and constructive meeting, collectively working towards the conservation of whales and dolphins.