

Opening Statement 68th Meeting of Parties, Portoroz, Slovenia 17-22 October 2022
International Whaling Commission
Republic of Panama

The Government of Panama wishes to thank the Government and People of Slovenia for organizing the 68th meeting of the International Whaling Commission and for their kind hospitality during this successful event about the Conservation of Cetaceans Worldwide and Animal Welfare.

We wish 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 we also want to recognize the impact the pandemic had on the financial situation of the Member States. We express our concern about the delicate financial situation that this body is going through, and we expect to make our outmost efforts to overcome this difficult situation.

For Panama, the International Whaling Commission continues to be the most important international forum for dealing with cetacean conservation issues. Under the context of the IWC, the sighting of cetaceans in our country has achieved that many coastal communities improved their quality of life thanks to the non-lethal activity of cetaceans, with strengthened regulations for safe sighting of cetaceans and visitors. In the way, Panama 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 of the moratorium on commercial whaling.

Since 2005 we declared our National waters a Panama Marine Corridor for Protection and Conservation from Marine Mammals areas; our recent National Ocean Policy proposes to turn our country into a model for the Latin American region where marine and coastal resources are protected, conserved, valued and used in a sustainable manner to positively impact the quality of life from our populations in an inclusive and participatory manner, with policies based on scientific and technological management pillars that can be successful implemented within a legal framework that guarantees respect in the management of the oceans and seas.

Panama was consolidated as a “Blue Leader” by not only managing to protect the 30% of our marine surface before 2030, but already accomplishing to have the 43% of our marine protected area. That demonstrates the great commitment we have to the objectives of the alliance for 30x30. We are sure that this expansion will favor the populations of whales and other cetaceans which use the oceanic habitat as a habitat for their biological life function.

We recently assumed the “pro tempore” Presidency of the Eastern Tropical Pacific Marine Corridor (CMAR) with the firm commitment that the four countries will work together in a

unified political effort, recognizing the urgent need to protect and restore the health of our ocean and to build a sustainable ocean economy.

Consequently, Panama expresses its opposition 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”. The hunting of cetaceans constitutes an inappropriate measure, and it is contrary to the mitigation of the food crisis; this is the reason why Panama also rejects the draft Resolution on “Food Security” and any other initiative with the same orientation. Given the environmental, economical and social relevance of living cetaceans, and their contribution to biodiversity, sustainable development and their role in mitigating the effects of climate change; Panama supports the integrity of the Whale Sanctuaries already established by the Commission and endorses the creation of new sanctuaries. In this regard, we offer our unconditional support to the proposal for the creation of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary and its Management Plan, endorsed by the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee of the IWC, while urging all members to provide their valuable support.

Panama supports the draft Resolution on “Marine Pollution by Plastics” by recognising the seriousness of the problem generated by the accumulation of plastic wastes of all sizes that reaches the seas, and highlights the tasks carried out by the Scientific and Conservation Committees in this matter. Only sustainable development that guarantees the diversity and protection of the environment can lead us to a better world.