

68th International Whaling Commission (IWC) Meeting

Portoroz, Slovenia, Thursday 13th October 2022 to Friday 21st October 2022

Opening Statement



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WWF's goal is to ensure that viable populations of all cetacean species occupy their historic range, and fulfill their role in maintaining the integrity of the ocean and freshwater ecosystems. We work at a local level and across a broad range of international fora to address and reduce threats to cetaceans. In doing so, WWF acknowledges the widely varied cultural attitudes toward the conservation and management of whales.

WWF opposes commercial whaling, now and until WWF is convinced that the governments of the world have brought whaling under international control, with a precautionary and conservation based enforceable management and compliance system adhered to by the whaling nations.



Voting rights and Contracting Governments' contributions

Document FA/68/4.1.1/01 proposes limited relaxation of the current rules on voting rights, which preclude contracting Governments whose contributions are in arrears of two years or more from voting. The document proposes that those in arrears of three years or less would be allowed to vote at this meeting only, while longer-term changes are proposed to ease payments and to restore voting rights where contributions are paid before the opening of a meeting.

WWF acknowledges that the pandemic has placed additional economic pressure on contracting Governments. However, given that the current rules are in line with those of many other international bodies, and given the critical budgetary situation for the IWC (see below), the IWC should reflect carefully on any easements, beyond those proposed for this meeting.

Budget reform strategy

The IWC finances are in a critical state. Document FA/68/4.1.2/01 sets out proposals for reform of the budget, including changes to the budget cycle, while document BSC/68/5.3/01 sets out options regarding cost cuts and increases in contributions.

WWF has been a long-standing supporter of the conservation work of the IWC, and we want to see it continue into the future. To that end, we recognise that painful decisions will have to be made. We hope for an outcome of the discussions that balances the severity of cost cuts with a realistic increase in contributions. Regarding the proposal that the Scientific Committee meets at least biennially, we propose that it should have virtual and face-to-face meetings in alternate years. Increasingly, the IWC SC is requested to provide timely advice on a range of cetacean conservation issues critical to other policy organisation and meetings.

Governance reform

Document FA/68/4.1.2/02 proposes the establishment of a Management Committee, which would replace the Technical Committee, and subsume the functions of the Aboriginal and Subsistence sub-committee and those of the Infractions sub-committee. The functions of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues would be assigned to the three remaining Committees: Scientific, Conservation and Management.

WWF has concerns about the creation of a Committee with such a diverse mandate. We consider that the terms of reference of this proposed Committee remain unclear; in particular, it is not clear which functions of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues would be taken up by each of the respective remaining Committees. Accordingly, we are not in a position to support this proposal.



South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary

Document IWC/67/10, from Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, proposes the creation of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. No less than 54 species of cetaceans inhabit the waters of the South Atlantic Ocean. Seven of these (blue, fin, sei, common minke, Antarctic minke, humpback and southern right whales) are highly migratory baleen whales that feed in the Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic oceans during summer and breed in tropical, subtropical and temperate waters in winter and spring. The proposal for the creation of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SAWS) represents the legitimate interests of southern hemisphere countries to offer permanent protection to these whale populations that benefit coastal communities through whale watching activities and nonlethal research.

WWF supports this proposal

Resolution on Plastics

Document IWC/68/8.1/01, tabled by the European Union, is a proposed Resolution which:

- Calls on the IWC to engage in the negotiations on a global plastics treaty;
- Requests the Scientific Committee to contribute to assessments of the impacts of plastics on cetaceans;
- Requests the Conservation Committee, Scientific Committee and Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group to consider to facilitate pilot projects on gear marking in hot spot areas of cetacean entanglement;
- Calls on Contracting Governments to report relevant information on marine plastic pollution;
- Recommends that the IWC Secretariat add marine debris mapping to its engagement with the Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) process; and
- Requests the Secretariat to develop a strategy for the IWC to eliminate single-use plastics in all meetings and the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat.

WWF supports this proposed Resolution

Resolution on food security

Document IWC/68/8.2/01, tabled by Guinea, Cambodia, and Antigua and Barbuda, contains a draft Resolution which seeks to establish a connection between the absence of commercial whaling and wider food security issues. The Resolution calls for the Commission and its members to factor food security into their decision-making.

WWF recognizes that subsistence whaling is an integral part of food security for some indigenous coastal communities, and we note that the IWC already allows for this where



there is a demonstrable need. WWF does not consider that there is any sufficient evidence of direct food security implications arising from the absence of commercial whaling. Instead, greater consideration should be given to improved fisheries management measures and better distribution of resources that allow for increased access to good nutrition where it is needed. Therefore, we cannot support this proposal.

Resolution on the implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks aimed towards the lifting of the moratorium and the orderly development of the whaling industry

Antigua and Barbuda has tabled a draft Resolution, in Document IWC/68/8.3/01, calling for a working group to facilitate re-opening of negotiations on a commercial whaling régime.

We OPPOSE this Resolution, as previous negotiations have failed on the issue of the conditions required for a resumption in commercial whaling, and there is no indication that the dynamics of the various factions have changed.

Cetaceans and Climate Change

Finally, WWF, together with Ocean Care, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Environmental Investigation Agency, Humane Society International and Animal Welfare Institute, wish to draw the attention of contracting Governments to the need to intensify work on the impacts of climate change on cetacean populations.

We strongly recommend that the IWC, led by the Conservation Committee, develops an integrated climate change response programme for cetaceans aimed at fully understanding the threat of climate change, providing clear advice on tools to mitigate its negative impacts and build resilience, and developing appropriate conservation measures. We advise that this includes recommendations from the most recent IWC climate change workshop in 2021, which included a call for a further evaluation to complete its work. In this new focused effort, the IWC should also seek to work in partnership with other international organisations with complementary interests.