



**International  
Whaling  
Commission**

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**CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO COMMISSIONERS  
AND CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS  
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**Action Arising from the Workshop on Whale Killing Methods**

At its 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting, held in Grenada, 24 – 28 May 1999, this Commission adopted a Revised Action Plan on Whale Killing Methods and a Resolution arising from that Workshop (IWC Resolution 1999-1).

The Resolution encourages the submission of certain data to the annual meetings of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues, and future Workshops, the development of more accurate indicators for determining time to death, and the provision of appropriate technical assistance to aboriginal subsistence whaling.

A copy of the Revised Action Plan and the Resolution are attached to this communication.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. R. Gambell  
Secretary to the Commission

Encs.

## REVISED ACTION PLAN ON WHALE KILLING METHODS

### A. Equipment and Methods

- (1) Encourage continued co-operation between Japanese, US, Danish and Norwegian scientists to refine the design of penthrite grenades as far as possible.
- (2) Continue improving accuracy of delivery of penthrite grenade harpoons, including assessment of refined sighting equipment suitable for rapid action under conditions encountered at sea. Support and encourage the development and implementation of programmes to provide training in the safe handling and effective use of killing devices including the penthrite grenade and in other aspects of the hunt.
- (3) Continue to review constraints on shooting distance and relative orientation of vessel and whale and encourage reducing times to death.
- (4) Continue to review effectiveness of secondary killing methods with a view to reducing times to death in whales and encourage the application of the most effective methods.

### B. Indication of insensibility and death

- (5) Develop better criteria for determining the onset of permanent insensibility in whales, using physiological and behavioural observations.

### C. Assessment of cause of death in relation to observed time to death

- (6) Where possible, examine the effects of trauma, and its consequences, caused by harpoons and other devices used to capture whales, and its relationship to the reactions of the captured whale.

Develop standardised guidelines for recording major indications of death.

### D. Collection and provision of information on time of death

- (7) Encourage collaboration between technical and scientific experts with a view to suggesting evidence based guidelines for the collection and dissemination of information in relation to both primary and secondary killing methods in forms that allow the effectiveness of different methods to be compared. The data should be presented to the maximum extent possible with statistical analysis that allows independent appraisal and analysis.
- (8) Encourage collection and presentation of struck and lost rates and standardised time to death records in all aboriginal subsistence catches of whales and undertake assessment of requirements for controls on the use of rifles to kill unsecured whales.
- (9) Encourage the incorporation of data collection and reduction of struck and lost rates in initiatives in Greenland relating to the beluga and narwhal hunts.

### E. Assessment of physiological status of hunted animals

- (10) Develop suggested guidelines for, and where possible implement collection of representative biological samples from whales in extremis with an aim to determining reliable indices of stress for animals killed in whaling operations.

### F. Next steps

The Workshop participants encourage the IWC to hold a further Workshop in 3-5 years and to call for improved data collection, analysis and provision in order to evaluate progress made in improving whale killing methods. To emphasise the technical and scientific nature of the Workshop it should be separated in time from the IWC Annual Meeting and Working Group sessions; for example, immediately preceding a meeting of the Scientific Committee. In the meantime information should be provided to the appropriate technical Working Group.

## IWC Resolution 1999-1

### RESOLUTION ARISING FROM THE WORKSHOP ON WHALE KILLING METHODS

NOTING that the terms of reference for the 1999 IWC Workshop on Whale Killing Methods included the consideration of all methods of killing currently in use in whaling or known to be in development, and specified that a comparative analysis of the methods be undertaken with a view to improving whale killing techniques and minimising times to irreversible insensibility and death;

RECALLING IWC Resolution 1997-1 which urged aboriginal subsistence whalers to do everything possible to reduce still further any avoidable suffering caused to whales in such hunts;

RECOGNISING the efforts made by some countries to provide information on research and improvements in hunting methods;

WHEREAS the Workshop submitted its report, IWC/51/12, to the Commission for consideration;

Now THEREFORE the Commission

1. COMMENDS the Report of the Workshop and accepts the 11 point Action Plan (which appears as Appendix 1 of the Chairman's Report of the 51<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting) as the basis for advice to members of the IWC.

2. ENCOURAGES where possible the submission to the annual meetings of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare

Issues, and future Workshops of relevant information such as:

- number of whales killed by each method;
- number and proportion of total whales killed instantaneously;
- time to death for each animal not killed instantly;
- number of whales targeted and missed;
- number of whales struck and lost;
- calibre of rifle where used and how many bullets used;
- methods used to determine unconsciousness/time of death.

3. ENCOURAGES the development of more accurate indicators for determining time to death other than cessation of movement.

4. RECOGNISES the difficulty in some aboriginal subsistence hunts of obtaining time to death information; and notes that, where it can be assessed, the lack of information regarding time to death on aboriginal subsistence hunts prohibits an assessment of any improvement in these hunts.

5. ENCOURAGES all Contracting Governments to provide appropriate technical assistance to reduce time to unconsciousness and death in all aboriginal subsistence whaling.