



**Opening Statement to the 64th annual meeting
of the International Whaling Commission (IWC)
Panama July 2nd-6th 2012**

The future for whales and the IWC

Campaign Whale is extremely grateful to the Government of Panama for a warm if somewhat wet welcome to their beautiful country.

Campaign Whale believes that the case for the existing moratorium on commercial whaling is stronger today than ever before. Commercial whaling has devastated many whale populations, pushing entire species to the brink of extinction. Even now, considerable scientific uncertainty remains over the size and status of the world's remaining whale populations and the mounting threats they face from increasing environmental degradation.

The recent, tragic extinction of the Baiji demonstrates that many of the most threatened populations and species of whales are actually small cetaceans. Campaign Whale believes the IWC has a critical role to play in researching and implementing recovery plans for highly threatened species such as the vaquita. We hope this work will continue and expand, remaining a high priority for both Member States and the IWC, in future.

Equally, Campaign Whale believes the IWC can only meet its responsibilities to conserve and allow for the recovery of the world's remnant great whale populations by upholding and strengthening the moratorium on commercial whaling for decades to come. Times and attitudes have changed, and so has the scale of threats to these wonderful animals. The IWC must evolve from an anachronistic organisation dedicated to killing whales into a modern convention dedicated to researching and protecting all cetacean species.

We would like to see the IWC expand its work to address the conservation and welfare needs of all whales, including those small cetacean species that are hunted in huge numbers around the world. These animals are under serious threat, including from toxic pollution, posing a threat to the whales and the people that eat them.

Campaign Whale is extremely concerned at the serious health risks posed to people that consume whale products that are increasingly contaminated with highly toxic chemical compounds caused mostly by industrial pollution of the environment. People that regularly consume whale and dolphin meat, blubber and other organs are seriously jeopardising their health and that of their children. Meanwhile, the threat posed to cetaceans and the marine environment from toxic pollution is truly alarming. It is not possible to accurately predict the combined impact of increasing levels of dangerous pollutants and accelerating environmental decline upon whales and marine ecosystems. Consequently, it cannot be responsibly claimed that consumption of whale products is safe, or that any level of whaling is truly sustainable.

Campaign Whale is calling on the IWC to:

- Secure a permanent end to commercial whaling.
- Reject any proposals that would legitimise commercial whaling in coastal waters.

- Close existing loopholes that allow commercial whaling under 'objection' or for so-called 'scientific research'.
- Maintain the essential distinction between commercial and subsistence whaling and oppose increasing efforts to create a new category of whaling that would circumvent the moratorium on commercial whaling.
- Address the inherent cruelty of killing methods.
- Develop a long-term comprehensive programme of non-lethal research in to the growing environmental threats to all cetaceans.
- Implement recovery plans for all endangered populations and species.
- Work with appropriate international fora to end the consumption of contaminated whale products because of the serious risk to human health.
- End international trade in whale products.
- Stop the hunting of the small whales, dolphins and porpoises that are killed in their tens of thousands each year and are not protected by the IWC moratorium.
- Adopt proposed whale sanctuaries provided they do not compromise the future of the moratorium in any way.
- Promote well regulated and responsibly conducted whale-watching operations as a viable and sustainable economic alternative to whaling.