

CIRCULAR COMMUNICATION TO COMMISSIONERS
AND CONTRACTING GOVERNMENTS
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Report on and follow-up to the SWG and Intersessional Commission Meetings, Florida, March 2010

1. Meeting of the Small Working Group (SWG) on the Future of IWC

The SWG met in St. Pete, Florida from 2-4 March. The meeting was to have been chaired by Cristian Maquieira, Chair of the Commission. Unfortunately, Ambassador Maquieira was unable to attend the meeting because of important duties he had following the earthquake that hit Chile on 27 February. The meeting was chaired in his absence by Anthony Liverpool, Vice-Chair of the Commission. A statement released by the Vice-Chair at the end of the meeting is available on IWC's website at: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/documents/commission/future/PressReleaseSWGMar10.pdf>. The SWG's report of the meeting should be available by 31 March 2010.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the 'Chair's Report to the Small Working Group on the Future of IWC', i.e. Document IWC/M10/SWG 4. This document was emailed to all Contracting Governments on 22 February 2010. It is also available, together with other meeting documents, on the website at: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/meetings/swg0310.htm>. The Chair's Report to the SWG contains a *draft* 'Consensus Decision to Improve the Conservation of Whales' and this was used as the basis for discussions in Florida. It was not possible in the time available for the SWG to reach a consensus view of the document. Discussions focussed on clarification and comments by SWG members on the general concepts behind the overall document and some more detailed discussion of the appendices to the document, including some draft Schedule text. The following timetable for further work on the future of IWC leading up to IWC62 in Agadir was agreed:

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| 5 March 2010 | Support Group Meeting |
| 10 March 2010 | Draft report of Florida SWG meeting circulated to SWG members for comment and approval. Comments to be sent to the Secretariat by Friday 26 March 2010. |
| 31 March 2010 | Chair incorporates comments to the draft SWG report and the final SWG report is circulated to Commissioners and Contracting Governments and placed on the IWC website. |
| 1 April 2010 | Formal proposed text changes to the draft Consensus Decision due at the Secretariat |
| 9 April 2010 | Secretariat circulates proposed text changes |
| 11-15 April 2010 | Support Group Meeting to consider proposed changes and the issues outlined in Table 1 of this report and provide support to the Chair on any new/revised text |
| 22 April 2010 | Deadline for proposed Schedule amendments – circulation to Commission and Contracting Governments and placed on the IWC website |
| 16-17 June 2010 (1.5 days allowed) | Discussions on the Chair's report/proposed Schedule amendment prior to the Commission Plenary |

In developing material for consideration at IWC62 in Agadir, the SWG believed that it would be important to provide the opportunity to all Contracting Governments (not just SWG members) to comment on the draft Consensus Decision. **Formal proposed text changes to the draft Consensus Decision are therefore requested to be sent to the Secretariat by 1 April 2010.** All comments will be considered by the Support Group when it meets in mid April.

Intersessional Commission Meeting

At the 2009 Annual Meeting in Madeira last year, the Commission agreed to leave open the decision on Greenland's request for a take of humpback whales until an intersessional meeting, by which time the report from a small scientific group established to investigate the issue of conversion factors would be available to facilitate discussions. The intersessional meeting was held in St. Pete during the afternoon of 4 March. At that meeting, the report from the scientific group was presented and discussed and Greenland again presented its request for a take of humpback whales. All meeting documents are available on IWC's website at: <http://www.iwcoffice.org/meetings/intersession10.htm>. Because there was no quorum at the meeting, no decision on Greenland's request could be taken. Denmark has indicated that it wishes a decision to be taken at IWC62.

A Chair's Report of the intersessional meeting will be available in due course.

Dr. Nicky Grandy
Secretary to the Commission