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Update on progress in engaging other Intergovernmental Organisations on the issue of marine debris

IWC Secretariat



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

Update on progress in engaging other Intergovernmental Organisations on the issue of marine debris

Submitted by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

IWC discussions on marine debris have highlighted the desirability of working in collaboration with other intergovernmental bodies. Two expert IWC marine debris workshops, held in 2013 and 2014, made specific recommendations on engagement with a range of IGOs (Annex 1). Subsequently, at its meeting in June 2015, the Scientific Committee discussed these recommendations and considered an overview of some of the current international initiatives that are focused on marine debris (SC/66a/E4). The Committee **recommended** that the Secretariat liaise with members of the intersessional working group on marine debris to identify appropriate opportunities for engaging with other IGOs.

In response to this recommendation, the Secretariat has worked with the intersessional working group to identify a number of opportunities for engaging with other IGOs, based on existing IWC recommendations as well as new and emerging opportunities, and to agree a set of actions. This paper provides a report on progress to date and suggestions for next steps.

The Scientific Committee is **invited** to discuss the progress made and to comment on or endorse the suggestions in the document.

Proposed next steps, in terms of **further action to strengthen engagement on marine debris with other intergovernmental organisations** are summarised below:

- Continued efforts to strengthen the relationship with FAO with regards to by-catch and entanglement, and input to the forthcoming FAO COFI meeting (11-16 July 2016) with regards to the Draft Guidelines for the implementation of a System for the Marking of Fishing Gear
- IWC Secretariat to continue its efforts to strengthen engagement with UN DOALOS including on issues relevant to UNCLOS and to marine debris.
- Continued cooperation with the IMO and the identification, by the Scientific Committee, of any questions related to port reception facilities and the GSIS port reception facilities database to be communicated to the Secretariat of the IMO
- IWC Secretariat to continue its efforts to strengthen engagement with UN DOALOS including on issues relevant to UNCLOS and to marine debris
- The Secretariat continue in its efforts to strengthen engagement with UNEP, with particular focus on opportunities to collaborate with UNEP regional offices and organisations; and consideration is given to the IWC Secretariat joining the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) ¹ as a means of networking, information sharing, knowledge exchange and progress monitoring
- The IWC review the relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to IWC work on marine debris and other issues and take forward (as appropriate) opportunities for engagement with the process for SDG review and implementation.
- The Secretariat continue to cooperate with CMS, ASCOBANS, ACCOBAMS and the CBD on issues related to marine debris
- The Scientific Committee, through its ongoing work on marine debris, may wish to raise any issues for communication to particular RFMOs on which IWC are represented as observers.
- The Secretariat liaise with the marine debris intersessional working group to determine and take forward the most appropriate means of participation in the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI).

¹ <http://www.marinelitternetwork.org/page/global-partnership-marine-litter>

DETAIL OF PROGRESS TO DATE AND NEXT STEPS

1. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

The 2014 Workshop on marine debris recommended that the IWC encourages the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) to conclude its work on gear marking and that the IWC participates in technical work associated with its finalisation, drawing attention to the value that gear marking can contribute to mitigation approaches. Subsequently the Secretariat submitted information relevant to entanglement in marine debris to an FAO-organised expert consultation on the marking of fishing gear. The culmination of this will be the production of Draft Guidelines for the implementation of a System for the Marking of Fishing Gear, which will be presented to the forthcoming meeting of FAO COFI, 11-16 July 2016. The Secretariat will be attending this meeting.

Suggested next steps:

- (i) The Scientific Committee may wish to consider the relevance of the proposed Guidelines for the implementation of a System for the Marking of Fishing Gear proposal for the IWC's future work on entanglement prevention (including relating to ALDFG) and ask the Secretariat to make a supportive statement on the gear marking guidelines to be communicated at the COFI meeting in July. As input to this, members of the intersessional working group on marine debris, and other IWC experts could be invited to provide comments on the draft guidelines when they are available
- (ii) The Secretariat continue in its efforts to strengthen its relationship with FAO with regards to by-catch and entanglement.

2. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

In response to a number of IWC recommendations and mandates relevant to marine debris and other issues (e.g. ship strikes) the Secretariat has undertaken a number of recent activities to strengthen its engagement with the IMO including attending as an observer the joint FAO/IMO working group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing on IUU fishing and related matters (at which marine debris was discussed) in November 2015; and meetings of the IMO Assembly (November 2015) and the Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC) (April 2015). In addition, the Secretariat met with the IMO Secretariat on January 15th 2016 to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest including marine debris. Amongst other issues, the role of port reception facilities and the GISIS port reception facility database in facilitating action to address marine debris was discussed, and the IMO invited the IWC to submit any detailed questions on this in follow up to the meeting. In addition, the IMO reported on the work of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) (www.gesamp.org) on marine debris, and highlighted opportunities for the IWC to become involved in GESAMP activities in the future.

Suggested next steps:

- (i) Secretariat to continue efforts to cooperate with the IMO on marine debris (and other matters).
- (ii) Secretariat to explore the potential advantages of IWC engagement with GESAMP and report back to the Scientific Committee.
- (iii) The Scientific Committee may wish to identify questions relating to port reception facilities and the GISIS port reception facility database for communication to the Secretariat of the IMO.

3. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The IWC Executive Secretary met with the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) in March 2016 to discuss issues of mutual interest and the potential for cooperation. This included cooperation on marine debris, summarised below.

The UN General Assembly updates two relevant resolutions a year, relevant to marine debris, to which the IWC could input. These are the Sustainable Fisheries resolution and the annual resolution on the Law of the Sea UNCLOS. In its 2014 annual resolution on the Law of the Sea (UNGA/69/245) UNGA expressed concern on the issue of marine debris and noted the need for better understanding of the sources, amounts, pathways, distribution trends, nature and impacts of marine debris. It also noted the work of the IWC on marine debris. As an observer to UNCLOS the IWC is invited to report on the implementation of the annual omnibus resolution and a report on its implementation of 69/245, including on marine debris, was provided by the Secretariat in July 2015.

Each year the Secretary General produces a report to the General Assembly on the status of implementation of the Law of the Sea in advance of the General Assembly debate on its next resolution. The priority focus for 2016

is on marine debris and microplastics. As a result, the IWC was asked by the UN Division on Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) to contribute to the report of the Secretary General on the issue of “Marine Debris including Plastics and Microplastics” to the seventeenth meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea, to be held from 13-17 June 2016, and the Secretariat submitted a report, which has been provided as document SC/66b/E/10. This report will eventually be published at http://www.un.org/Depts/los/consultative_process/consultative_process.htm

Suggested next steps: IWC Secretariat to continue its efforts to strengthen engagement with DOALOS including on issues relevant to UNCLOS and to marine debris.

4. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP has a number of relevant initiatives for marine debris including the UNEP Global Programme of Action for Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), the Global Partnership on Waste Management (GPWM), the Honolulu Strategy, and the Global Partnership on marine litter (GPML). In September 2015 the Secretariat met with UNEP (Heidi Savelli) to discuss IWC and UNEP collaboration on marine debris. Several opportunities emerged from this including an invitation to join the GPML; and for the IWC to review the draft report on marine debris from the Executive Secretary of UNEP to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) (section 5. below). In addition, there are potential opportunities for closer engagement with UNEP regional offices and organisations on the issue of marine debris (as well as entanglement and by-catch more broadly), including on the development and dissemination of best practice and capacity building and joint fundraising. This could build on the success of existing cooperation in the Caribbean between the IWC entanglement programme and UNEP-SPAW.

Suggested next steps: The Secretariat continue in its efforts to strengthen engagement with UNEP, with particular focus on opportunities to collaborate with UNEP regional offices and organisations.

5. United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)

The first meeting of UNEA June 2014 adopted resolution 1/6 on marine debris (http://www.unep.org/unea/UNEA_Resolutions.asp). This resolution welcomed the work undertaken by the IWC and CMS on marine debris. Amongst other actions, the resolution requested the Executive Director of UNEP to undertake a study on marine plastic debris and marine microplastics and report to the next meeting of UNEA. At the invitation of UNEP, the IWC Secretariat provided some comments on this report, which was presented for discussion at the second meeting of UNEA, held from 23-27th May 2016. At this meeting, UNEA adopted a second resolution on marine debris which, again, welcomed the work of the IWC (as well as other organisations) on the impacts of marine debris on marine biological diversity and invited the coordination of this with other relevant work under the Global Partnership for Marine Litter.

Suggested next steps:

- (i) Consideration is given to the IWC Secretariat joining the Global Partnership on marine litter <http://www.marinelitternetwork.org/page/global-partnership-marine-litter> as a means of networking, information sharing, knowledge exchange and progress monitoring
- (ii) The Secretariat continue to take a watching brief on developments under UNEA

6. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25th September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are 17 SDGs, under which sit a total of 169 targets. Several of the SDG targets provide a clear mandate for action on marine debris. In particular, SDG 14 is to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. Target 14.1 is to “by 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”. Other relevant targets include those relating to food security, public health, water quality and sustainable consumption and production. The SDGs thus present the opportunity for marine debris to be addressed in an integrated manner alongside these other sustainable development issues. The inclusion of marine debris (and other issues relevant to the IWC) in the SDGs presents opportunities for the IWC to engage in this global discussion on progress and priorities relevant to its mandate; to influence action by

governments, regional bodies and the private sector; and for enhanced cooperation with other organisations on issues of mutual interest relevant to the SDGs. It could also present opportunities for fundraising.

The UN General Assembly has recently agreed to organize a global conference on the implementation of SDG 14 once every three years. These global conferences will be the main forum at which the global community will review progress and decide on future action to achieve Goal 14 and its various targets. The first of these conferences will be organized in 2017 in Fiji and the IWC has the opportunity to participate in this meeting.

Suggested next steps:

- (i) The IWC review the relevance of the SDGs to IWC work on marine debris and other issues
- (ii) The IWC Secretariat seek to keep a watching brief on and take forward (as appropriate) opportunities for engagement with the process for SDG review and implementation- on marine debris as well as other relevant issues.

7. The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) and Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area (ACCOBAMS).

CMS and its daughter agreements are all actively working on bycatch and marine debris. On 30 June 2015 the Secretariat met with the CMS and ASCOBANS Secretariats to discuss collaboration on a range of issues including marine debris.

Suggested next step: Secretariat to continue engaging with CMS, ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS on marine debris (amongst other issues) to explore opportunities for further collaboration.

8. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Secretariat has undertaken a number of recent efforts to strengthen engagement with the CBD on a range of issues of mutual interest, including marine debris. This included a meeting between the IWC Executive Secretary and the Executive Secretary of the CBD in March 2016. Marine debris will be an item for some in-depth consideration at the forthcoming CBD Conferences of Parties from 4-17 December 2016 and there are opportunities for the IWC to provide input to this meeting.

Suggested next step: Secretariat to continue to explore opportunities for cooperation with the Convention on Biological Diversity on marine debris including at its forthcoming Conference of Parties in 2016.

9. Regional Marine Fisheries Organisations (RFMOs)

Several RFMOs have adopted resolutions or recommendations relating to marine debris. In addition, the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) has passed a resolution on Fisheries Aggregation Devices. The IWC engages with RFMOs through observers at meetings as well as through the Regional Fisheries Body Secretariats network.

10. Suggested next step: The Scientific Committee may wish to raise any issues for communication to particular RFMOs on which IWC are represented as observers. This could initially include a request for observers to report back annually to the intersessional group on RFMO actions relating to marine debris. **The Global Ghost Gear Initiative**

In September 2015 the IWC Secretariat attended the launch conference of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) <http://www.ghostgear.org/>, a cross-sectoral alliance committed to driving solutions to the problem of Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) worldwide. It could be useful for IWC to continue to engage in this and to input scientific and technical advice relevant to marine debris and cetaceans. The GGGI could be considered as a potential vehicle by which the IWC can cooperate and coordinate its research efforts and activities relating to the issue of ALDFG and secure the networking benefits associated with this.

Suggested next step: The Secretariat liaise with the marine debris intersessional working group to determine and take forward the most appropriate means of participation in the GGGI.

Annex 1. Existing IWC Recommendations for engaging with other IGOs on marine debris

IGO	Recommendation	Source
International aid agencies; international financial institutions; world bank	Engagement with international aid agencies and international financial institutions (such as World Bank) involved in the development of fisheries management in developing countries to ensure they take into account the impacts to cetaceans from unintended consequences of the various types of gear being brought into communities as an economic development strategy.	2013 IWC workshop on marine debris
Various; ICES; NOAA; CCAMLR, North Pacific Marine Science Organisation (PICES)	A number of inter-governmental organisations including ICES; NOAA; CCAMLR, North Pacific Marine Science Organisation (PICES) were identified as potentially important in future collaborative efforts	2013 IWC workshop on marine debris
RFMOs	IWC and its Secretariat work together with the Secretariats of the other major IGOS and RMFOs relevant to this issue to ensure consistency of approach, synergy of effort and exchange of information to develop appropriate mitigation strategies that recognise that (a) prevention is the ultimate solution but that (b) removal is important until that ideal is realised.	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris
IMO	IWC and IMO Secretariats consider the most effective way (e.g. via IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee) to request that the GISIS port reception facility database is updated to specify which ports accept end of life fishing gear, including any restrictions on the gear they accept and additional useful information (such as recycling potential) and to encourage an expansion of the provision of no-special-fee port reception facilities	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris
IMO- MARPOL	IWC (and other IGOs) encourage their member states to review national level implementation of MARPOL Annex V and other conventions relevant to marine debris reduction.	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris
UNEP; CMS; CBD; UNGA	IWC Secretariat, in cooperation with others such as UNEP, CMS and CBD, bring the issue of incidental capture of marine mammals to the attention of the UNGA and/or COFI. Consideration should also be given to multi-agency funding proposals to support mitigation actions. Other suggested areas that might be appropriate for future co-operation included relevant aspects of gear-marking, removal of ALDFG, development of guideline documents, holding of joint expert workshops, databases of lost gear, sharing of fishing effort data, links between biodiversity and livelihood, mitigation measures and the harmonising of data recording.	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris
SPREP	Workshop welcomes information that SPREP will report annually to the IWC on progress with initiatives on the issue of marine debris. It encourages SPREP to work with regional and international agencies on existing and new initiatives to address the problem of marine debris including its impact on cetaceans.	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris
FAO COFI	IWC encourages COFI to conclude its work on gear marking and that the IWC participates in technical work associated with its finalisation, this process, drawing attention to the value that gear marking can contribute to mitigation approaches The IWC Secretariat should also consider highlighting the IWC's work on the impacts of marine debris on cetaceans at meetings of other IGOs, e.g. the forthcoming COFI in 2016	2014 IWC workshop on marine debris