



Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas Opening Statement
66 th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
Portoroz, Eslovenia

The **Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas** (ICB), is a non-governmental organization from Argentina dedicated to the conservation of whales and their habitat. Since 2006 we attend the meetings of the International Whaling Commission and coordinate strategies with Argentine government representatives and with Latin American civil society organizations to promote the conservation, non-lethal and non-extractive use of whales.

Our **research based on non-lethal techniques**, initiated by Dr. Roger Payne in 1970 and continued by our team of scientists, provides strong evidence that today the study, management and conservation of whales does not require to kill a single whale.

This forum was created to regulate commercial whaling in order to ensure the operation and long-term management. However, the **change of view** about the importance of preserving natural resources has enabled the work of the IWC to evolve towards the conservation and non-lethal use of whales and small cetaceans. A consequence of this change is the **growth of the working agenda of the Conservation Committee** that includes conservation management plans, small cetaceans, bycatch and the increasing involvement of the IWC in training workshops to mitigate problems such as entanglement, ship strikes, chemical and noise pollution, emerging diseases, climate change and habitat degradation. In this context, we welcome and share the objectives and long-term vision that the IWC has developed through the Conservation Committee Strategic Plan 2016-2026.

However, many of these important developments are overshadowed by the attempt of some member nations to keep commercial whaling alive and disguised as "science" in order to get access to special permits. This year is the 30th anniversary since the moratorium on commercial whaling was enacted, a world milestone in the history of conservation. **We call upon all member countries to respect the integrity of the moratorium as well as that of the sanctuaries** established by the IWC .

On March 31, 2014 the International Court of Justice ruled that the JARPA II did not meet the purpose of scientific research of the statutes governing the International Whaling Commission and, therefore, was not science. The NEWREP-A proposed by the Japanese government ignores and rejects decisions made by the highest international judicial body, making use of Article VIII to resume commercial whaling. In a letter submitted to the Scientific Committee in 2015, five hundred scientists from thirty countries expressed the following;

“Will killing over 300 whales a year provide the answers that the program has not been able to provide so far? It will not. The government of Japan has given the methodology prevalence over the objectives and this is a serious mistake in the scientific method. The mere fact of proposing a new “research” whaling program in order to shed light on questions that the program has been unable to answer is nothing but a clear demonstration of the absolute scientific failure of these whaling programs of the

Japanese government, and it does not bear much analysis. There is no other study on great mammals that has required such a disproportionate sample size to learn about their biology and ecological needs. The international scientific community would not accept any research program based on the annual killing of hundreds of bears, felids or chimpanzees "to study them". This renders the nature of NEWREP-A, based on the killing of great mammals for study purposes, unacceptable per se."

While it is true that Article VIII allows the issuance of special permits, this article dates from 70 years ago when today's great variety of non-lethal and highly sophisticated study techniques did not exist. Today, scientific whaling is commercial whaling in disguise.

Based on the above, we request the contracting governments committed to the conservation of whales, that they do not legitimate whaling in the name of "science" by regulating it. To bring "scientific" whaling under control, means to accept that it is a valid study methodology and that the death of thousands of whales is necessary to learn about their biology.

The great challenge that IWC faces on its 70th anniversary is to accept that the **whaling industry belongs to the past** and that the **new mandate** is to work collectively to **ensure the conservation of whales and to mitigate the threats that affect them**. Whales are indicators of the health of the seas, and provide essential ecosystemic services such as the maintenance of the atmospheric CO2 balance.

Today we propose to change paradigms. Whales are special and unique forms of life. To protect the lives of whales is not only important for their biological, ecological and economic relevance. **To protect the lives of whales is also a matter of respect and ethical principles**. Every whale is a particular individual with a special life history, with its own "**whaleity**" (or whale personality) and is unique, important and irreplaceable. When an individual whale is killed by a whaling harpoon, the harpoon not only kills the individual, but the interrelationships of that individual with its mother, siblings and offspring disappear as well. When this happens, every whale population becomes poorer and is saddened, and the ethics of humanity suffers and is damaged.

We invite governments to engage in a new paradigm and to work to prevent the world whale populations to become poorer and saddened as a result of the death of whales from human impacts.