



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

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Circular Communication to Commissioners and Contracting Governments
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**United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal
14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable
development – Comments and Suggestions**

This Circular invites any comments and suggestions from IWC Contracting Governments regarding IWC Secretariat participation in the forthcoming United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (the "UN Oceans Conference), 5-9 June 2017, New York.

At IWC66 in 2016, the Commission endorsed a series of recommendations relating to engagement with other organisations, including that the Secretariat would take a watching brief on and pursue, as appropriate, opportunities for engagement with the process for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) review and implementation. The Secretariat intends to attend the forthcoming UN Oceans Conference in order to further explore and (as appropriate) promote the contribution of the work of the IWC to the SDGs.

The UN Oceans Conference will invite Voluntary Commitments (<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/>) from Conference participants and other stakeholders. These are voluntary initiatives undertaken by Governments, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, academic and research institutions and others that contribute to the implementation of Goal 14 and its associated Targets. Voluntary Commitments can be registered online and a list of voluntary commitments will be produced at the end of the Conference.

The work of the IWC supports implementation of Goal 14 and its Targets in several areas. As such, the Secretariat proposes to register several voluntary commitments describing existing IWC programmes of work that contribute to the implementation of SDG 14, specifically on (i) the Entanglement Response Network (ii) the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and (iii) the Whale watching Handbook. Registering these voluntary commitments would allow the IWC to promote its progress and to explore the potential for partnerships to help take forward these IWC priorities.

Draft text of an IWC Voluntary Commitment on the Entanglement Response Network is given below. Text of other voluntary commitments will be developed in consultation with the Chairs of the relevant Standing Working Groups.

Draft text- Voluntary Commitment on the Global Whale Entanglement Response Network (GWERN)

Research has suggested that over 300,000 whales and dolphins die each year due to entanglement in fishing gear or marine debris. Entanglement is arguably the single most significant threat to cetacean welfare, and an obstacle to the recovery of some endangered whale populations.

Chair: Dr Joji Morishita (Japan)

Vice-Chair: Mr Andrej Bibic (Slovenia)

Executive Secretary: Dr Simon Brockington

The IWC is working with a group of international experts to build a global network of professionally trained and equipped entanglement responders. The programme began in autumn 2011. The first training workshop was held in March 2012. Since then it has reached nearly 1000 scientists, conservationists and government representatives from over 40 countries. In its future work the GWERN will continue the IWC's work to improve the palliative care for entangled cetaceans, while expanding work toward the prevention of the mortality and suffering caused by entanglement and bycatch.

Contracting Governments and accredited Observers are invited to submit any comments or suggestions on these proposals by Monday 3 June 2017.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S Brockington', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Simon Brockington
Executive Secretary

c.c. Accredited observers to the IWC