



September 10, 2018

IWC 67

Plenary Session

World Animal Protection Opening Statement

In 2015, World Animal Protection successfully launched the **Global Ghost Gear Initiative**, a cross-sectoral platform with more than 92 organisations including corporates, governments and multilaterals working to address the issue of Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG), also called ghost gear, through its 3 active working groups. Since its inception the GGGI has facilitated and scaled up over 10 global solution projects, we have developed and launched the Best Practice Framework for the Management of Fishing Gear, we have built the biggest repository for ghost gear data through the launch of a data portal and accompanying 'Gear Reporter App', as well as seen a steady growth in our participant base now including the support of 12 Governments.

World Animal Protection as an accredited observer has a longstanding working relationship with the IWC and we have actively contributed as part of the Welfare Correspondence Group, the Scientific Committee and have helped establish the Global Whale Entanglement Response Network (GWERN) along the Pacific Coasts of the USA, Canada and Mexico. We also contributed to the Draft Assessment Marine Mammal Animal Welfare Framework, which explicitly highlights that ghost gear poses one of the most serious welfare threats to marine mammals.

World Animal Protection and the Global Ghost Gear Initiative believe that to achieve safe and thriving oceans the global community must give even greater priority to the issue of marine debris, and in particular, to the deadliest form of marine debris, ghost gear.

Each and every year we, collectively, abandon, lose, or otherwise discard 6 to 8 hundred tonnes of fishing gear in our oceans. Once lost, it becomes ghost fishing gear with devastating impacts on our fish stock levels, the marine environment and on marine life.

One in ten pieces of marine debris in the ocean today is a piece of ghost gear. However, if measured by weight, ghost gear accounts for over half of all macro plastics in our oceans today.

Besides being abundant, ghost gear is indisputably the deadliest form of marine debris, ghost fishing gear is 4 times more likely to impact marine life, through entanglement, than all other forms of marine debris combined.

In recognition of the strong impact ghost fishing gear has on cetaceans, and acknowledging the important work the IWC is already doing in this area, and the added value collaboration with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative could offer, IWC 66 highlighted in the Chair report that *"The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee on marine debris and encouraged further co-operation with other organisations, including the GPML and GGGI."*

In light of the recommendation in the Chair report for IWC 66, we are calling on Member States to support the following suggestions:

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- For the International Whaling Commission to continue to work on the issue of marine litter including Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear recognising the welfare and conservation threats it poses to cetaceans; and to continue to actively support practical projects such as the Global Whale Entanglement Response Network, which reduce the threat fishing gear poses to cetacean species.
- For the International Whaling Commission to endorse the *Draft Resolution on Ghost Gear entanglement among cetaceans* as put forward by the Brazilian Government under agenda items 7, 11 and WKM&WI Agenda item 6.
- For the International Whaling Commission to continue to work in partnership with influential intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as well as multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) to work constructively to implement best practices to prevent, mitigate and cure/remove ALDFG, and consequently to reduce the entanglement of whales and dolphins in ghost fishing gear.
- For the Conservation Committee and Scientific Committee to incorporate ghost fishing gear and its impacts to cetaceans in its works, including collecting data for risk assessment for each gear's propensity to become ALDFG and to pose a threat to harm cetaceans and which species or regions are most affected, as well as data on entanglement to feed into global data hubs such as the one managed by the GGGI, the largest depository on ghost gear data in the world.

The Global Ghost Gear Initiative, a multi-stakeholder partnership, brings together all relevant stakeholders – governments, fishers, industry and civil society – and acts as a global hub for ghost gear data, supports policy development in both the public and the private sector, and in true cooperative spirit, builds practical solutions to prevent and reduce ghost gear. The Global Ghost Gear Initiative strands ready to continue to assist in this important work.