

Opening statement by

AUSTRIA**to the 63rd Annual Meeting of the IWC, St. Helier, Jersey, July 2011**

in support of and in addition to the EU-Statement

The Austrian delegation is pleased to participate in the 63rd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission and thanks Jersey for its hospitality.

We recognise that the broad range of efforts needed in the management and conservation of cetaceans requires a concerted, collaborative and international effort. Therefore we recommend the intensified IWC **cooperation with international organisations**, especially with UNEP on marine debris, the IMO on ship-strikes, the FAO on bycatch, IUCN, CMS, WHO, ICES as well as CITES, to mention only a few. Austria attaches great importance to the ship strikes and bycatch issues and continues to look forward to receiving a comprehensive report from the European Commission on EU-efforts to reduce bycatch, based on **EU regulation 812/2004** as asked by the Scientific Committee in 2010.

Thanks to the generous support of Japan, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which took place from 18-29 October 2010 in Nagoya, was a great success. The **Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the CBD strategic plan** requests that by 2020 at least 10 % of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. The contribution of IWC to the **International Decade on Biological Diversity** must be to ensure that all cetaceans remain a resilient and healthy component of marine ecosystems. In light of the deeply regrettable **extinction** of the Baiji dolphin, additional test cases for the ability of the the IWC to prevent population and species extinctions include the Vaquita, river dolphins, Right Whales, Arabian Sea Humpback Whales and Western North Pacific Gray Whales.

We are grateful for the comprehensive program of ongoing work on environmental threats by the Scientific Committee, and we were proud to host a special workshop on the effects of climate change on small cetaceans in December 2010 in Vienna, which has helped make the IWC the foremost authority on the issue of climate change and cetaceans.

In view of the detrimental effects of the deteriorating marine environment on whales and dolphins, the **nuclear catastrophe** in Japan and the **oil spill** in the Gulf of Mexico show just how quickly environmental concerns and environmental degradation can become overriding issues if insufficient preventive and precautionary measures are taken. Morbidity and mortality from ingestion of **marine debris** have been documented in at least twenty-three species of cetaceans. The problem ranges from microplastics to plastic bags and other items. Consequently, we recommend that the IWC formally reaches out to UNEP, which has highlighted this issue.

Austria welcomes the compilation of this year's **State of the Cetacean Environment Report - SOCER** - with its regional (2011: Southern Ocean) and global sections. SOCER underlines that the IWC is in full accordance with modern research in promoting environmental and conservation concerns in its agenda. Member States, scientists, as

well as international organizations are encouraged to continue to provide information and support, including funding, for this important report (2012 regional topic: Indian Ocean).