

Statement by INDIA at the 63rd meeting of the International Whaling Commission held at Jersey, Channel Islands during July 11-14, 2011

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since India has taken the floor for the first time in the 63rd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, we would like to express our gratitude to the States of Jersey, Government of U.K. and the Secretariat of the IWC for hosting this event in the beautiful and picturesque locale of St. Helier, Jersey. I would also like to congratulate you Mr Chair on your election and for conducting the proceedings of the 63rd Meeting of IWC in a very effective and congenial manner.

Mr Chair, India recognises the onerous role of the International Whaling Commission in conservation of whales and other cetaceans and as always would offer its fullest cooperation. We have supported continuation of the moratorium on killing of whales, and, therefore, find it very disturbing that a large number of whales are being caught purportedly for 'scientific research'.

India appreciates the notable work having been carried out by the Scientific Committee in assessment of the existing whale stocks and the efforts by Australia and Germany to mount aerial surveys in areas of pack ice with a view to validating the whale populations.

We note the good work being done by the Conservation Committee on whale sanctuaries, whale watching and conservation management plans and welcome the creation of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary, as proposed by Brazil and Argentina. We would strongly urge the IWC to also include conservation of small cetaceans including the endangered Indo-Gangetic Dolphin, the National Aquatic Animal of India in its future programmes.

We also appreciate the role of the Scientific Committee and Conservation Committee on environmental and health issues. We are seriously concerned with likely impacts of climate change on the marine and coastal biodiversity including the marine mammals, and would urge the IWC to address these issues on priority. Such studies should cover the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea also.

Mr Chair, we support the Revised Management Scheme containing the strong safeguards for conservation of whales along with robust compliance mechanism to ensure low catch limits for scientific purposes as we are consistently committed to our principled stand on moratorium on killing of whales. We also appreciate the efforts made by Australia, United Kingdom and Norway on whale welfare and ethics related issues.

India is of the view that IWC should work for systematically reducing the dependence of aboriginal communities on whales by providing them alternate food sources and livelihoods, for example, through whale watching and ecotourism. India would be supportive of building a sustainable whale watching industry.

India is opposed to violent protests at the seas by any organization, though we recognize the rights of an individual or organization to express its dissent in a peaceful manner within the ambit of law of the land and international rules and regulations.

I thank you Mr Chair.

**Dr Jagdish Kishwan
Whaling Commissioner of India**