

Draft Resolution on Marine Plastic Pollution

Submitted by the Czech Republic on behalf of EU Member States parties to the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW)¹

CONFIRMING that the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans is a priority concern for the International Whaling Commission (IWC);

RECOGNISING that plastic pollution spans five of the eight priority areas of environmental concern identified by the IWC Scientific Committee and endorsed by the Commission in 1997;

RECALLING the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly, and especially Goal 14 to Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, which includes the following target 14.1: By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution;

RECALLING Resolution 2018-3 on Ghost Gear Entanglement Among Cetaceans;

RECOGNISING the transboundary nature of marine plastic pollution and the importance of regional and international cooperation by IWC Contracting Governments and other International Organisations, including inter alia the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Arctic Council and International Maritime Organisation (IMO);

EMPHASISING the alarming scale of actual and projected increases in plastic and the adverse impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans, which is more substantial than previously thought;

RECOGNISING the IWC's unique global role and mandate in understanding and addressing the impacts of plastic pollution on cetaceans that have serious conservation and welfare implications.

THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

COMMENDS the adoption by the UN Environment Assembly of Resolution UNEP/EA.5/Res.14 agreeing to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment;

DIRECTS the Secretariat to explore options for the IWC to engage as a stakeholder within the INC process;

ENDORSES the outcome of the December 2019 marine debris workshop, relevant reports of the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee workplan on marine debris (to be discussed at IWC68);

DIRECTS the IWC Secretariat to explore ways to increase collaboration and cooperation with regional and international organisations, including Arctic Council, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) to share information, avoiding overlap and develop and implement best practice to prevent and mitigate marine plastic pollution impacts on cetaceans;

REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to consider to contribute to the assessment of the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans, including by the collection and collation of appropriate data from around the world;

¹ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden

REQUESTS the Scientific Committees to consider a global risk assessment identifying “hotspots” potentially through the modelling of increased exposure levels of plastic ingestion and entanglement. This could integrate the biological characteristics of different species of cetaceans and plastic dispersion models.

REQUESTS the Conservation Committee, Scientific Committee and Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues Working Group to consider to facilitate pilot projects on gear marking in hot spot areas of cetacean entanglement;

RECOMMENDS Contracting Governments to report relevant information on marine plastic pollution and plastic ingestion in stranded animals in their voluntary conservation and national Scientific Progress reports;

RECOMMENDS the IWC Secretariat to add marine debris mapping to its engagement with the Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) process;

REQUESTS the Secretariat to develop a strategy for the IWC to eliminate single-use plastics in all meetings and the day-to-day operations of the Secretariat.

REQUESTS the Secretariat to report back to IWC69 on progress made in the implementation of this Resolution.