

Annual Report of the International Whaling Commission 1998
50th Annual Meeting, 1998

IWC Resolution 1998-5
Resolution on Environmental Changes and Cetaceans

NOTING that the United Nations has declared 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean, in recognition of the increasing concern over the state of the marine environment, and that the 50th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission offers an opportunity to reflect upon the future of the Commission;

RECALLING that at the 38th Meeting the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, in determining the scientific work needed for a comprehensive assessment, identified the importance of examining the general features of whale dynamics, including the impacts on cetaceans of environmental changes and influence of human factors, other than direct exploitation;

RECALLING that at its 44th Annual Meeting the Commission adopted a resolution establishing a regular agenda item in the Scientific Committee to address the impact of environmental changes on cetacean stocks;

FURTHER RECALLING that at its 46th Annual Meeting the Commission adopted a resolution endorsing the plans of the Scientific Committee to pursue studies of environmental changes and their impacts on cetaceans and identifying priority areas that needed to be addressed in this context;

NOTING that the IWC has sponsored two special scientific workshops, one on the effects of chemical pollution on cetaceans and the second on the effects of climate change on cetaceans;

AWARE that the Workshop on Chemical Pollution and Cetaceans concluded 1) that there are sufficient data on the adverse effects of pollutants on the health of other marine mammals and terrestrial species to warrant concern for cetaceans; and 2) that indicator species identified were bottlenose dolphins, harbor porpoises and belugas (SC/47/Rep2);

AWARE also that the Workshop on Climate Change and Cetaceans concluded that the available evidence on the effects of such change is sufficient to warrant general concerns for cetaceans (SC/48/Rep2);

RECALLING that at its 48th Annual Meeting the Commission adopted a resolution endorsing the establishment by the Scientific Committee of its Standing Working Group on Environmental Concerns (SWGEC) and directed it to consider and act on the specific recommendations of the two IWC special workshops and on other priority areas for assessing the impact of environmental changes on cetaceans;

NOTING that the SWGEC in its first report identified topics of particular importance to its work, including climate/environmental change, ozone depletion and UV-B radiation, chemical pollution, physical and biological habitat degradation, impact of noise, effects of fisheries, Arctic issues, and disease and mortality events; and

RECALLING that at the 49th Annual Meeting the Commission adopted a resolution urging the Scientific Committee to produce detailed scientific proposals for future work on environmental concerns on a multi-annual basis.

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

COMMENDS the Scientific Committee for its two ongoing initiatives on 1) the significance of pollutants and chemical contaminants on cetaceans and 2) baleen whale habitat and prey studies related to climate change and identification of 1) physical and biological habitat degradation and 2) Arctic issues as next priorities (IWC/50/4 Sec. 12.5);

DIRECTS the Scientific Committee to give high priority to implementing the research initiatives of the SWGEC and to continue to produce costed scientific proposals for non-lethal research to identify and evaluate the impacts of environmental changes on cetaceans in all priority areas;

DIRECTS that the Chairman of the Scientific Committee, in consultation with the Chair of the SWGEC, invite participants with necessary expertise in the identified priority areas of the field of environmental changes to attend the annual meetings of the Scientific Committee and intersessional workshops of the SWGEC;
ENCOURAGES Contracting Governments to send scientists with experience in the field of environmental changes to take part in the Scientific Committee and specifically the SWGEC;

URGES the Scientific Committee, in its work on comprehensive assessments, to examine, in accordance with its previous determinations, the general features of whale dynamics, including the impacts on cetaceans of environmental changes and the influence of human factors other than direct exploitation; and

AGREES to establish a regular Commission agenda item entitled “Environmental Concerns,” under which the Scientific Committee would continue to report annually on its progress in non-lethal research on environmental concerns, and Contracting Governments could report annually on national and regional efforts to monitor and address the impacts of environmental change on cetaceans and other marine mammals.