

Annual Report of the International Whaling Commission 2003
55th Annual Meeting, 2003

Resolution 2003-3
Resolution on Southern Hemisphere Minke Whales and Special Permit Whaling

NOTING that the Government of Japan continues to issue Special Permits, under the provisions of Article VIII of the Convention, for lethal scientific research on minke whales in the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (Japan's Whale Research Program under Special Permit in Antarctica – JARPA);

RECALLING that the Scientific Committee agreed in 2000 that there was no valid estimate for Southern Hemisphere minke whales and that there is still no agreed estimate for Southern Hemisphere minke whales;

FURTHER RECALLING concerns expressed in Resolution 2000-4 regarding appreciably lower preliminary abundance estimates for Southern Hemisphere minke whales;

CONCERNED that the Scientific Committee report of 2001 did not rule out that the Southern Hemisphere minke whale population may have suffered a precipitous decline over the past decade;

NOTING Resolution 2001-7, which requested that the Scientific Committee provide to the Commission at IWC 54:

- (i) a list of plausible hypotheses that may explain this apparent population decline,
- (ii) the possible implications that such a decline in abundance may have for the management of minke whales in the Southern Hemisphere, and for ecologically-related species, in particular other cetaceans, and the state of the Antarctic marine ecosystem;

FURTHER NOTING that the list of plausible hypotheses reported by the Scientific Committee (IWC/54/4 – Report of the Scientific Committee) mostly focused on explanations for a decline in abundance estimates rather than an actual decline in population; and concluded it was most appropriate to fully address the request contained in Resolution 2001-7 after completing its work on reviewing the IDCR/SOWER abundance estimates, which in 2003 remains incomplete;

RECOGNISING the emerging importance of alternative non-lethal research methodologies such as scat DNA sampling and biopsy samples;

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION

REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to provide to the Commission, after the completion of the IDCR/SOWER abundance estimates, all plausible hypotheses to explain any decline in abundance estimates that may emerge, and in doing so to consider fully:

- (i) the possible negative impact of the take of minke whales under Japan's Research Program in the Antarctic, including struck and lost data, on the decline in minke whales population estimates; as well as
- (ii) the impact of environmental change factors;

CALLS ON the Government of Japan to halt the JARPA program, or to revise it so that it is limited to non-lethal research methodologies;

RECOMMENDS that no additional JARPA programs be considered until the Scientific Committee has completed:

- (i) an in-depth review of the results of sixteen years of JARPA;
- (ii) its review of the abundance estimates for Southern Hemisphere minkes; and
- (iii) the actions requested above

and that any such programs should be limited to non-lethal research.

