

PRESS RELEASE DAY 4

The Commission began the morning by resuming the discussions of the previous day on environmental and health matters. It received the report of the Scientific Committee ([IWC/64/Rep1](#)) on progress with issues related to climate change and cetaceans and ecosystem modelling. The Commission agreed to hold a workshop on Anthropogenic Impacts of Cetaceans in the Arctic in spring 2013. After an initial constructive discussion of matters relating to both cetacean and human health, the Commission broke its discussions to allow time to for the text of a revised resolution to be completed and put later to the meeting.

The Commission then returned to discussion of the aboriginal subsistence whaling limits for the Greenlandic hunts. It was not possible to achieve consensus on the request by Greenland ([IWC/64/12](#)). The Greenlandic proposal was therefore put to a vote and was defeated by 25 to 34 votes with 3 abstentions. The Chair expressed his regret at the impasse. The agenda item was closed.

The Commission then considered a number of administrative matters including the possibility of moving to biennial meetings. These discussions will be completed tomorrow.

The next Commission Item discussed was Item 19.1, 'small cetaceans'. The Scientific Committee's priority topic this year had been a review of the 10 beaked whale species found in the North Pacific and northern Indian Ocean. These populations are not well understood and the Committee made a number of recommendations to improve knowledge. Their vulnerability to military sonar and to seismic surveys was highlighted, as was the problem of bycatch. The need for effective mitigation was stressed.

The Committee then discussed the critically endangered species, the vaquita that lives in the Upper Gulf of California, Mexico. It numbered only about 220 animals in 2008 and continues to decline. It reaffirmed that the only reliable approach for saving the species is to eliminate vaquita bycatch in entangling fishing gear. It strongly recommend that, if extinction is to be avoided, all gillnets should be removed from the upper Gulf of California immediately. A number of countries echoed the Committee's concern and while recognising Mexico's efforts thus far, urged action as soon as possible. Mexico understood and recognised this concern.

The Committee also expressed concern over some other populations of small cetaceans. It noted bycatch in fishing gear and other threats affecting harbour porpoise populations in European waters of the Belt Sea and the inner Baltic. It urged development of effective monitoring and mitigation measures. It was concerned over high bycatches in fishing gear of a population of franciscana in Brazil and endorsed a national recovery plan.

Longstanding concerns exist over the status of river dolphins. The Committee this year had additional concerns over intentional killing for bait in Brazil of two Amazon species, the botu and the tucuxi, in addition to other threats they face. It made a number of recommendations and Brazil and other range states indicated their willingness to act on these. The Committee was also pleased to hear of conservation efforts for the Indus River dolphins in Pakistan and the Mekong River population of Irrawaddy dolphins in Cambodia.

Finally, the Committee had expressed concern over the endangered Hector's dolphins and a sub-species of this, the Maui's dolphins. Bycatches in fishing gear were again a serious problem. New Zealand informed the Commission that it was extending the existing protected area in order to improve the situation.

This year, was the last year of the three-year term for the Chair of the IWC Scientific Committee, Dr Debi Palka. She will be succeeded by the Vice-Chair, Dr Toshihide Kitakado (Japan) and the new Vice-Chair, Dr Caterina Fortuna (Italy). The Commission thanked Dr Palka for her tremendous service and looked forward to working with new Chair and Vice-Chair.

Finally, the Commission returned to the resolution on cetacean and human health. This was adopted by consensus **(IWC/64/13rev2)**.