

Draft Resolution on Minamata Convention

Submitted by Uruguay, Brazil and Colombia

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have identified the adverse effects of pollution from mercury as a serious problem worldwide for human health and the environment.

NOTING the adoption in 2013 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.

FURTHER NOTING that most member countries to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) signed the Minamata Convention;

AWARE that cetaceans have a wide range of distribution in marine and freshwater ecosystems, can act as sentinels to ecosystem variability and reorganization and are particularly vulnerable to environmental contaminants, including organochlorines—such as polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and dioxin—as well as heavy metals, such as methylmercury

CONCERNED about the human health issues associated with the consumption of heavy metals, such as nerve damage, reproductive and developmental disorders, immune system suppression, liver damage, skin irritation, and endocrine disruption, certain cancer risks and neurological and reproductive disorders.

RECOGNIZING that the Commission has adopted several Resolutions¹ expressing concerns on the negative impacts of environmental degradation on cetaceans, in particular in respect to organic contaminants and heavy metals levels, as well as its human health effects;

RECALLING resolutions 1996-8, 1998-11, 2000-6, 2001-10 and 2014-2 that foster collaboration between the IWC and other intergovernmental organization related to pollution, among others.

ALSO RECALLING the precautionary principle enunciated in the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio;

FURTHER RECALLING article 19 on research, development and monitoring and article 22 on effectiveness evaluation of Minamata Convention.

CONSIDERING that the IWC has a continued role to play in monitoring and providing guidance on, among others, scientific research related to levels of pollution in cetaceans;

APPRECIATIVE of the advances made by the Scientific Committee on persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals on cetaceans and **WELCOMING** the results of the POLLUTION 2000+ research programme, endorsed by the IWC at its 51st Annual Meeting;

MINDFUL that the IWC with its specific responsibility in the management and conservation of whale stocks may have a mutual interest in supporting the ratification of international treaties with overlapping concerns.

¹ Resolutions 2012-1, 2001-10, 2000-7, 2000-6, 1999-4, 1998-11, 1998-5, 1997-7, 1996-8, 1995-10, 1994-13, 1993-13, 1993-12, 1993-11 and 1981-7

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

CONGRATULATES the adoption of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

ENCOURAGES Contracting Governments to sign, ratify and adhere to the Minamata Convention.

DECIDES to seek collaboration with Minamata Convention to exchange information, contribute in monitoring mercury levels in cetaceans and advance in the protection of human health related issues.

INVITES member States, as well as relevant organizations, to promote scientific research programmes relevant to the monitoring on the presence and trends in levels of mercury observed in cetacean populations as indicators of marine and freshwater ecosystems and to continue providing available data to the Scientific Committee on this matter.

URGES Contracting Governments to cooperate to assess the impact of mercury and mercury compounds on human health and the environment and to provide information on commerce and trade on cetaceans with mercury levels as well as to provide comparable monitoring data.

CALLS ON Contracting Governments to take all possible measures, nationally and in appropriate international fora, to monitor and reduce pollution from mercury and adopt policies for its prevention, reduction and control;

REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to provide at IWC67 a summary of the current state of knowledge on the presence of organic pollutants and heavy metals, with emphasis on mercury, in cetaceans worldwide, and to identify areas of environmental and health concerns, areas where more research should be prioritized and areas where suspension of takes for human consumption is recommended.

REQUESTS that the Secretariat share this resolution with the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention and seeks ways to collaborate with its objectives.