

Draft Resolution on Minamata Convention

Submitted by Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia, Switzerland and Monaco.

ACKNOWLEDGING that the United Nations 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.

WELCOMING the adoption in 2013 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the objective of which is to protect human health and the environment from the anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

AWARE that cetaceans which have a worldwide distribution in marine and freshwater ecosystems, can act as sentinels of ecosystem change and are vulnerable to environmental contaminants such as methylmercury.

AWARE of the "AMAP Assessment of Mercury in the Arctic" (2011) and of the "AMAP Assessment of Human Health in the Arctic" (2015) carried out by expert working groups of the Arctic Council, which drew attention to the adverse effects of persistent contaminants, in particular mercury pollution, on Arctic human populations;

RECOGNIZING that the Commission has adopted several Resolutions¹ expressing concerns on the negative impacts of environmental degradation on cetaceans including in respect to mercury;

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

ALSO RECALLING the precautionary approach enunciated in the Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (UNEP, June 1992);

CONSIDERING that the IWC has a continuing role to play in monitoring and providing guidance on scientific research related to levels of mercury in cetaceans;

WELCOMING the results of the POLLUTION 2000+ research programme, endorsed by the IWC at its 65st Annual Meeting;

MINDFUL that the IWC with its specific responsibility in the management and conservation of whale stocks may have an interest in cooperating with other intergovernmental organizations with common concerns.

NOW THEREFORE THE COMMISSION:

WELCOMES the adoption of the Minamata Convention and encourages its effective implementation.

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

INVITES Contracting Governments, as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations, to promote non-lethal scientific research programmes related to monitoring the presence and trends in levels of mercury and mercury compounds observed in cetacean populations as indicators of ocean health and to continue providing available data to the Scientific Committee on this matter.

INVITES ALSO Contracting Governments to cooperate together and with the WHO to assess the impact of mercury and mercury compounds on human health and on the marine environment including the provision of related monitoring data.

REQUESTS the Scientific Committee to provide at IWC67 a summary of the current state of knowledge on the presence of heavy metals, with emphasis on mercury compounds, in cetaceans worldwide, and to identify areas of ocean health and human health concerns, and geographic areas where research should be prioritized in this regard.

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

¹ Resolutions 2012-1, 2001-10, 2000-7, 2000-6, 1999-4, 1998-11, 1998-5, 1 997-7, 1996-8, 1995-1 0, 1994-13, 1993-13, 1 993-12, 1993-11 and 1981-7