

Draft Resolution on Cetaceans and Their Contributions to Ecosystem Functioning

Submitted by Chile and Brazil

ACKNOWLEDGING that cetaceans make significant contributions to ecosystem functioning that are beneficial for the natural environment and people.

RECOGNIZING the need to integrate the values of biodiversity and the contributions made by cetaceans to ecosystem functioning into decision-making processes related to the conservation and management of cetacean populations.

FURTHER RECOGNIZING that the Commission has given priority to research on the effects of environmental changes on cetaceans due to increasing threats faced by cetaceans, including climate change, pollution, ship strikes, and entanglement among others.

AWARE that increasing scientific evidence suggests that whales enhance ecosystem productivity by concentrating nitrogen and iron near the surface through the release of faecal plumes, in some cases equivalent to that required to support prey consumption, such as has been reported for blue whales, sperm whales and humpback whales among others.

CONSIDERING that, because of their large size, live whales represent an important store of carbon while their carcasses efficiently export carbon from the surface waters to the deep sea, contributing to the mitigation of climate change.

ALSO CONSIDERING that iron defecated by whales stimulates carbon export into the Southern Ocean and thus whales play an important role in regulating atmospheric CO₂ levels, which may contribute to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

RECALLING resolution 2001-9, which acknowledged that better understanding of marine ecosystems would contribute to the conservation and management of living marine resources, and prioritized the study of interactions between whales and fish stocks.

NOTING the wide collaboration of the IWC with other international governmental conventions and organisations.

NOW therefore the Commission,

ACKNOWLEDGES the increasing scientific research data showing that whales enhance nutrient availability for primary production in feeding grounds and provide an important repository for carbon.

RECOGNISES the need to include consideration of the contributions made by live cetaceans and those that have died naturally to world-wide ecosystem functioning in conservation, management strategies and decision making of cetacean populations in particular, and ocean health in general.

ENCOURAGES Member States to work constructively towards the incorporation, in future decisions, agreements and resolutions, of the role played by live cetaceans in regulating and supporting ecosystem functioning.

RESOLVES to review the legal, ecological, management, environmental, social, economical and financial aspects related to the contributions of cetaceans to ecosystem functioning to people and natural systems, as a matter of priority.

DIRECTS the Conservation Committee to undertake the review previously identified and directs the Conservation and Scientific Committees to incorporate the contribution made by live cetaceans to ecosystem functioning into their work.

DECIDES to increase collaboration and co-operation with governmental, regional, and other international organisations to work on the contributions made by live cetaceans to ecosystem functioning issues, including the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, among others.