



17 January 2019

Dear Commissioners:

In our nearly 75-year history, the International Whaling Commission has established itself as the preeminent global organization for cutting edge science and management of cetaceans. As your Chairman, I am reaching out to the member countries of our organization to encourage your continued engagement in the IWC's critically important scientific and stewardship mission.

The Scientific Committee of the IWC is the premiere cetacean science organization in the world. Annual SC meetings attract the most talented scientists in a unique process that provides cutting edge analyses of the status of populations and identifies the primary threats. As members of the IWC, the Contracting Governments benefit from the scientific input of the SC, often in response to the data provided by these members. The SC has provided the technical input to ensure a solid scientific basis for establishing quotas for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. Some Contracting Governments are able to send their scientists with funding provided through the Government of Limited Means program, offering capacity building opportunities for new scientists.

In addition to overseeing the review and evaluation of stock status around the world, the Commission and its committees have expanded their work to include a wide variety of threats to the viability of cetacean populations. Through this work, Contracting Government representatives have been able to benefit from training and capacity building, such as entanglement and strandings response. The Bycatch Mitigation Initiative offers Contracting Governments the opportunity to assess the impact of fishery interactions on cetaceans and methods for monitoring and mitigating those impacts. IWC's work also contributes to the decisions made in other international fora, such as the International Maritime Organization, and the recent focus on collaboration means our impact and influence is growing all the time.

The Contracting Governments of IWC come to this organization with a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, which is to be expected given now 89 members from around the world. Throughout its long history, the IWC has strived to provide a forum in which these wide-ranging views can be expressed and discussed in a frank and respectful approach, including accredited observers. All Contracting Governments are given the opportunity to engage in the dialogue and debate at IWC meetings, along with opportunities to take on leadership roles through membership and/or chair positions with sub committees. It is my belief that we can all benefit from being part of a diverse and robust organization such as the IWC and I therefore strongly encourage you to remain a part of this process.

We should be proud of what the IWC has achieved and garner all our efforts to sustain this vibrant and unique organization. I look forward to working with you on the challenges ahead.

Sincerely,

Andrej Bibič  
Chair, IWC