

NEW ZEALAND

IWC67 is the Commission's opportunity to step up its global leadership on whale and dolphin conservation.

New Zealand thanks the government and people of Brazil for hosting the 67th meeting of the International Whaling Commission. We appreciate the warm hospitality that has been extended to all Members and Observers, and the inclusive participation of civil society.

As a long-standing member of the International Whaling Commission, New Zealand is pleased to support the Commission's evolution into a modern organisation that continues to be effective in the 21st century. The Commission's founding Convention was adopted in the 1940s when, compared with today, we knew very little about the contribution of whale and dolphin populations to healthy oceans and productive ecosystems. The strength of the Commission lies in the fact that we have successfully responded to significant changes in global opinion over the past 60 years within the framework of the 1946 Convention, bringing about an end to commercial whaling by almost all nations, whilst also preserving the ability to regulate legitimate whaling for several indigenous communities based on need.

We have a functioning Commission which can reflect the views of its Member States through democratic decision-making. It is a Commission which has achieved and continues to achieve the Convention's objectives. The adoption of renewed quotas for Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, one of the key tasks before the Commission this week, will reflect this Commission's ability to effectively manage divergent views amongst its membership.

The Commission is not as some argue, dysfunctional. It is a living Commission that is moving with the times. That said, we could do more to improve the way we operate in the Commission. New Zealand is pleased to support the Commission's new **Governance Review process**, to identify areas where we can modernise the way we operate. We expect this process to streamline our various committees, reduce operating costs, and introduce characteristics of a 21st organisation. We hope all Members will participate actively in this process and support consensus outcomes on recommendations that will be put to this Commission at its meeting in 2020.

The IWC has the opportunity to step up its **global leadership in whale and dolphin conservation and welfare** at this Commission meeting through: endorsement of the new online Whale and Dolphin Watching Handbook; progressing our engagement with other international organisations to reduce the number of cetaceans caught as by-catch or entangled in active or abandoned fishing gear; paying more attention to the transfer of knowledge for the humane killing of whales in Aboriginal Subsistence hunts; endorsement of core funding for annual meetings of the Conservation Committee; continuation of the Strandings Coordinator role; and the establishment of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. New Zealand is pleased to co-sponsor the initiative submitted by Brazil on Ghost Gear as contained in IWC/67/11.

The new **Whale and Dolphin Watching Handbook** will assist operators, tourists and local communities to ensure whale and dolphin watching operations are sustainable. The positive economic and social contribution that sustainable whale watching can make to local communities is clear. New Zealand is pleased to support the promotion and distribution of the new Handbook as one of the priorities under its recent contribution of \$40,000NZD (21,000GBP) to the Commission's Voluntary Conservation Fund. The Handbook will be an important tool not only for members but also

non-members. Once launched, we look forward to the contribution of local information from all countries with whale and dolphin watching operations. We hope that this Handbook will not only provide guidance for existing operations, but will also reinforce to a wider audience the benefits of whale watching as a sustainable economic and environmental alternative. We would like to acknowledge the work of the government of the USA for its leadership of this work, as well as all operators, scientists, communities and NGOs who contributed to its contents. It is a product of which this Commission should be proud.

New Zealand's long-standing and fundamental opposition to commercial whaling remains unchanged. It is well known that New Zealand is strongly committed to **maintaining the global moratorium on commercial whaling**. In respect of the proposal put forward by Japan as contained in IWC/67/08, New Zealand does not support that paper's view of the future of the IWC. Although presented as a reform proposal, its practical effect is clear – it is a request to resume commercial whaling. International opinion is unambiguous in its support for the global moratorium on commercial whaling. The proposal is unacceptable politically and unworkable practically. Global attention is focused on healthy oceans and the protection of biodiversity, and the IWC must be no exception. Now is the time for the Commission to invest in its conservation objectives. It is not the time to step backwards.

The Commission is fulfilling its role to regulate limited whaling, and this year will consider the renewal of quotas of whales that may be caught legitimately by local indigenous groups. New Zealand will support the adoption of quotas for **Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling** for indigenous communities provided the final package put forward by Denmark, Russian Federation, St Vincent and The Grenadines, and USA is consistent with the Convention and the Commission's procedures. New Zealand continues to urge governments with Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quotas to work with indigenous communities that engage in such whaling to ensure they have access to the most humane killing methods for whales. There are unacceptably long periods of "Time to Death" for some hunts.

New Zealand remains committed to supporting the Commission's role in non-lethal whale research. The **IWC-Southern Ocean Research Partnership** (IWC-SORP) is facilitating excellent research to improve our understanding of whale populations and behaviour, including the impacts of a changing climate on feeding grounds and migratory pathways. We support greater time being devoted in this Commission to discussing the outputs of non-lethal research and its promotion in other organisations with competencies relevant to the conservation of whale and dolphin populations, such as the IMO, CITES, FAO, CMS.

We see no place for lethal research to continue and again call on Japan to cease all lethal research under its so called "scientific whaling" programmes in the Southern Ocean and North Pacific. It is clear Japan's research objectives can be met through non-lethal research and we urge Japan to rethink what it is doing in the name of science. The report of the **Standing Working Group on Special Permits** (IWC/67/16) presents an accessible and succinct summary of the advice of this Commission's Scientific Committee. It is a useful basis to facilitate the Commission's assessment of whaling under Article 8 of the Convention. The reports of the Scientific Committee make clear that Japan has not demonstrated its lethal sampling is scientifically justified in any of its special permit programmes. We hope the Commission will fulfil its responsibility to consider the work of its sub-committees (in accordance with its inherent mandate to do so) and assess the advice provided to it by the Scientific Committee on programmes NEWREP-A, NEWREP-NP, and JARPN II.

New Zealand is particularly disappointed Japan chose to whale within the **Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area** within its first year of operation. Japan supported the establishment of the MPA under the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), which plays a crucial role in protecting and understanding the entire ecosystem. CCAMLR does not regulate whaling, however, we view whaling within the protection zone as undermining the *objectives* of the

MPA. The IWC, as the international body with responsibility for whaling, has a role at this meeting to express concern. We urge Japan to stop whaling in the area. We also urge Japan to respect the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary. The important feeding grounds of the Ross Sea region are critical for research on whale populations but there is simply no need for that research to be lethal.

New Zealand has conveyed to Norway our concern about the increase in its self-allocated quotas and the granting of export licences. We continue to urge Norway to cease issuing quotas for commercial whaling. New Zealand urges Iceland to move away from commercial whaling when the current 5-year quota expires at the end of 2018.

New Zealand would like to highlight work being undertaken by the Commission through its **Conservation Committee** to support the conservation and management of cetaceans. The development of the Conservation Committee's strategy and associated work plan has driven the establishment of work streams covering major worldwide issues of concern for cetaceans, including bycatch in fisheries, ship strikes, pressure from whale watching, marine debris, and marine noise. These initiatives underpin a growing ability of the IWC to translate its extensive technical expertise into real-world conservation efforts. To support these efforts, New Zealand supports **amendment of the Commission's Rules of Procedure to enable the Conservation Committee to meet annually**.

New Zealand wishes to encourage all members to participate in the Conservation Committee, including its **capacity-building activities in whale watching, by-catch, strandings, and disentanglement, including for small cetaceans**. Regardless of divergent views on whaling, these issues are relevant to all fishing and coastal states with whale and dolphin populations, and we hope that more members can benefit from the expertise contained in the work of the Conservation Committee. We would like to acknowledge the work of David Mattila in providing workshops on the safe disentanglement of whales and dolphins, including for local communities in Tonga in 2017. We welcomed the IWC's participation in the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programmes (SPREP) conference "Whales in a Changing Ocean" to mark the "**Year of the Whale**" in April 2017.

To date the Conservation Committee's work has been supported by contributions to the Voluntary Conservation Fund. New Zealand supports use of **core IWC funding for meetings of the Conservation Committee**.

New Zealand notes concerns raised by the Scientific Committee about the critically endangered **Māui dolphin**, found only off the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. We are committed to ensuring the long term viability of the Māui dolphins. Risks to these dolphins are managed through the Hector's and Māui Dolphin Threat Management Plan, which sets out a range of long-term protection measures for the dolphins, including restrictions on fishing, seismic surveying, and seabed mineral mining, among others. The Hector's and Māui Dolphin Threat Management Plan is being reviewed this year as a priority for the New Zealand government. The review will incorporate any new information and data obtained since it was developed in 2008 and since the review of the Māui dolphin portion of the Plan in 2012. The review will identify potential measures that the New Zealand Government can take to ensure effective protection to safeguard the long-term viability of these important marine mammals.

New Zealand was pleased to welcome "**Matariki**", a Southern Right whale, to Wellington in July this year. The whale was named because its visit occurred during Matariki, the Māori New Year. We hope the presence of Southern Right whales in our capital city will be a more frequent event as the population recovers.



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