

Consensus Resolution on Climate and Other Environmental Changes and Cetaceans

Submitted by the USA and Norway

WHEREAS the Commission has adopted Resolutions regarding the impact of environmental changes on cetaceans since 1980;¹

NOTING that the Commission decided in 1993 that the Scientific Committee should give priority to research on the effects of environmental changes on cetaceans in order to provide the best scientific advice for the Commission to determine appropriate response strategies to these new challenges;

NOTING that the Scientific Committee identified the priority issues for cetaceans of climate/environmental change, ozone depletion and UV-B radiation, chemical pollution, impact of noise, physical and biological habitat degradation, effects of fisheries, disease and mortality events;

APPRECIATIVE of the efforts to date of the Scientific Committee to understand the impact of environmental changes, starting with workshops on chemical pollution and climate change/ozone depletion in 1995 and 1996 resulting in the development of long-term, multi-disciplinary, multi-national research programmes;

AWARE that knowledge about climate change has advanced substantially since the first IWC workshop in 1996 and that since that time, unequivocal greenhouse-gas induced global warming has been demonstrated, often at rates exceeding some worst-case modelling scenarios;

NOTING work by other international fora on climate change and its impacts on wildlife, ecosystems, and human society;

WELCOMING the report of the Costa Rica Workshop on Cetaceans and Other Marine Biodiversity of the Eastern Tropical Pacific held in February 2009;

WELCOMING the Report of the February 2009 International Whaling Commission Scientific Committee (IWC SC) workshop on cetaceans and Climate Change (SC/61/Rep4);

CONCERNED that, as stated by the IWC SC workshop, “climate-related changes will impact negatively on at least some species and populations, especially those with small and/or restricted ranges, those already impacted by other human activities and those in environments subject to the most rapid change For these species there is a real potential for elevated risks of extinction.”

¹ See Resolutions 1980-Appendix 10; 1981-Appendix 7; 1992-Appendix 2; 1993-Appendix 12; 1993-Appendix 13; 1994-13; 1995-10; 1996-8; 1997-7; 1998-5; 1998-6; 1999-5; 2000-6; 2000-7; and 2001-10.

The Commission therefore:

ENDORSES the outcome of the climate change workshop and associated recommendations of the Scientific Committee given in IWC/61/Rep1, including the need to expand the current international multi-disciplinary efforts and collaborative work with other relevant bodies;

REQUESTS Contracting Governments to incorporate climate change considerations into existing conservation and management plans;

DIRECTS the Scientific Committee to continue its work on studies of climate change and the impacts of other environmental changes on cetaceans, as appropriate;

CALLS on Contracting Governments, IGOs and NGOs to support the expansion of this important work;

REQUESTS the Secretariat to forward this resolution and the workshop report (SC/61/Rep 4) to relevant bodies and meetings including inter alia the World Climate Conference, the UNFCCC and the IPCC in time for upcoming meetings; and

APPEALS to all Contracting Governments to take urgent action to reduce the rate and extent of climate change.