

## **Report of the Conservation Committee**

Thursday 26 June 2012, Panamá, Republic of Panama

### **1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho welcomed delegates to the meeting. A list of participants is given in Appendix 1.

#### **1.1 Appointment of Chair**

Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho (Mexico) was elected Chair.

The Committee paid tribute with a round of applause in honour of Alexandre de Lichtervelde who died in 2011. Alexandre had been Belgium's Commissioner since 2004 when Belgium joined the IWC. He founded the Ship Strike Working Group and was integral in the establishment of a centralised ship strikes database which went online in 2009. The database will continue to be an extremely useful tool giving knowledge and insight into global vessel-whale collisions. Alexandre was probably the most active member of the Conservation Committee, and year after year was commended for his work by its members. He had been elected as Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee last year at IWC/63.

Alexandre's dedication led to international initiatives beyond the IWC, e.g. by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and in the shipping industry. In 2010, his work on ship strikes culminated in an international workshop, which Alexandre called the "coronation of many years of work", the achievements and recommendations from which will reach far into the future. It is Alexandre's legacy that ship strikes are on the agendas of many organisations around the world and that the issue is discussed so widely today.

Alexandre was active in other areas of the IWC and in 2010, Belgium proposed a long-term strategy towards better small cetacean conservation. Likewise, in 2011 Belgium submitted a paper to strengthen Funding of the organisation to the IWC. He also he took part in the future-orientated discussions on Conservation Management Plans (CMP) and became one of the strongest proponents of a CMP for the threatened population of Arabian humpback whales.

Alexandre was extraordinarily diligent and full of expertise. Thus he did highest honour to his country. His legacy will reach far into the future and many of his proposals will serve as templates for the work of the IWC for a long time to come.

#### **1.2 Appointment of rapporteurs**

Allison Reed (USA) and Cherry Allison (Secretariat) were appointed rapporteurs.

#### **1.3 Review of documents**

A list of documents is given as Appendix 2.

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The adopted agenda is given as Appendix 3.

### **3. INVESTIGATION OF INEDIBLE 'STINKY' GRAY WHALES**

During the meeting of the Conservation Committee at IWC/57 in Ulsan in 2005, it was agreed that a research programme be established to address the issue of inedible 'stinky' gray whales caught by Chukotkan aboriginal subsistence hunters.

The Russian Federation presented a report (IWC/64/CC10) of a study of contamination problems in the gray whale carried out from 2005 to 2011. In 2011, two of the 126 gray whales landed were considered 'stinky'. It was not possible to draw conclusions on the cause of the 'stinky' gray whales, but the authors commented that the 'stink' may be a result of slow metabolism of petroleum hydrocarbons. In addition they found concentrations of persistent organo-chlorines, such as DDT, were low or not detected.

Problems associated with collecting the samples were outlined; the lack of freezers in some villages led to some samples being unfrozen and refrozen and some of the chemical compounds disappearing from the samples. The Russian Federation plans to continue this research and to collect additional samples; they welcome other scientists to collaborate in this work.

'Stinky' whales cannot be used for human or even animal consumption as they are abhorrent and cause allergies and diarrhoea. Thus the Russian Federation do not consider them to be part of the quota, but rather as struck and lost whales.

### 3.2 Committee discussions and recommendations

The USA expressed appreciation for the research and noted the recommendations of the Scientific Committee for additional work in this area. The USA indicated that it would be willing to assist the Russian Federation with the experimental designs and analyses needed to make progress on this problem.

Chile asked what proportion of 'stinky' whales were taken and whether the proportion has increased over the years. The Russian Federation estimated that, according to the experienced hunters from Lorima settlement who take almost half the Chukotkan quota, approximately 10% of the whales are 'stinky' whales. Experienced hunters can often identify 'stinky' whales from the smell of the blow and avoid catching them. Hunters in other villages are less experienced and the percentage of whales considered as 'stinky' by them is unknown. It was noted that inhabitants of the whaling villages say that sometimes walruses and some species of fish are also 'stinky'.

Germany drew attention to a proposal by the EU member states concerning the effect of contamination on cetacean health issues. 'Stinky' whales are an example of contamination and thus Germany supports making further efforts to determine the reason for this effect.

The Committee thanked the Russian Federation for its report and supported further work to determine the cause of the 'stinky' whale condition

## 4. SHIP STRIKES

In 2005, the Conservation Committee agreed to address the issue of whales being killed or seriously injured by ship strikes, recognising that this is also a matter addressed by the Scientific Committee. Ship strikes appear on the Scientific Committee agenda because the Revised Management Procedure (RMP) requires that recommended catch limits take into account estimates of mortality from all factors including, for example, ship strikes and bycatch. In practice these issues are also examined in a broader conservation and management context than simply the RMP. The role of the Ship Strikes Working Group (SSWG) is to develop more detailed proposals and co-ordinate any work initiated.

### 4.1 Report from the Scientific Committee

The Chair of the Scientific Committee reported that new information had been received on large whale and beaked whale ship strikes. Of particular concern were three Arabian Sea humpback whales documented between 2000 and 2012. This is a very small population and the increasing shipping traffic in this region is of concern to the Committee (see also Item 8.1). Information was also presented that 5 out of 71 recorded mortalities of southern right whales on the South African coast between 1999 and 2010 bore injuries consistent with a ship strike. One area of concern identified was the southern coast of Sri Lanka. This has one of the busiest shipping routes in the world and overlaps with an area of high whale sightings, including blue whales. The Committee **recommended** that the Secretariat send a letter to the Sri Lankan Government, drawing their attention to the discussion of this topic and ways in which the Committee may assist.

There is a need to better understand the variables that affect whether a ship struck whale will strand in order to assist in determining total numbers of strikes as well as where they might have occurred. There is also a need to better understand the relationship between vessel speed and collision risk in order to help determine mitigation measures. The Scientific Committee received several papers on these subjects and it **recommended** further studies of carcass drift, detection and deterioration for large whales that could be used to establish the location of death from a ship strike or other sources. It also **recommended** further studies that evaluate the risk reduction that could be achieved by speed restrictions.

Reports were received from several recent workshops that focused on ship strikes. These included an IMO Workshop on Environmental Aspects of the Polar Code, held in Cambridge in September 2011, where there was considerable discussion of ship strikes and the impact of underwater noise on whales. Another held in London in April 2012 (Bull and Smith, 2012) focused on ship strikes in the Bay of Biscay and made a series of recommendations, mainly dealing with mitigation measures but also related to assessing risk.

The IWC has been developing a global database of incidents involving collisions between vessels and whales. A web based data entry system has now been in place for two years but there have been few new reports submitted. The Scientific Committee **agreed** that a more pro-active approach is needed to encourage data to be entered and so **repeated the recommendation** for the appointment of a dedicated IWC ship strike data coordinator. This recommendation has been given to the Budgetary Sub-committee.

The Conservation Committee thanked the Scientific Committee for its valuable work and supported the appointment of a dedicated IWC ship strike data coordinator (although see Item 4.3 below). Belgium noted that not all countries submit National Progress Reports and that this hinders a proper evaluation of ship strike numbers.

#### **4.2 Report from the Ship Strikes Working Group**

There was no report this year as a result of the sad loss of its Chair.

Belgium regretted the lack of a report this year and suggested that the next report should cover the progress made since the last report, thus guaranteeing a complete representation of the issue relevant for this Working Group as well as its achievements.

#### **4.3 Committee discussions and recommendations**

Australia noted that the issue of ship strikes is important because it is required for healthy whale populations, for the recovery of whale populations and for the development of Conservation Management Plans.

After IWC63 a technical expert, David Mattila, was seconded to the Secretariat to work on entanglement response and ship strikes. He presented a report on the parts of his work that were relevant to ship strikes (IWC/64/CC 13). While his initial work focused largely on large whale entanglement, he was able to advance some of the work of the IWC with regard to ship strikes. In particular, he advocated the international importance of the IWC's ship strike database, and mitigation efforts at various workshops, symposia and conferences in which he participated. He also represented the IWC at an international technical workshop on the criteria for determining human-caused lethal impact to marine mammals, held in Woods Hole, USA, February 2012. The findings of this workshop will be very helpful toward finalising these criteria in the IWC's Ship Strike database handbook. He has also assisted several Commissioners and IGOs in relation to developing the proposed workshops detailed in IWC/64/WKM&AWI12, which include components on ship strike determination and mitigation.

The Committee thanked David Mattila his work and the efforts to publicise the ship strike database, noting the importance of this work. It also thanked the USA for making this possible.

Belgium suggested that if the contract for the technical expert is renewed, that he should collaborate closely with the proposed dedicated ship strike data coordinator. He regretted the lack of new reports to the IWC ship strike database and agreed that a more dedicated outreach programme should be started to promote the existence of, and stimulate use of, the database. A ship strike data coordinator is essential for this process. Belgium also suggested that the leaflet produced by Belgium in several languages should be used to make the database better known.

Australia supported the need for a database co-ordinator, but said it was important to discuss this matter in the context of other items that have been considered by the Conservation Committee. Priorities for future work must be set and these will include priorities for research.

Australia summarised cetacean ship strikes in Australian waters for the calendar year 2011, during which time the legislation was unchanged and there were nine ship strikes. Details are given in IWC/64/CC3. Australia is developing a national ship strike strategy aimed at reducing the likelihood of ship strikes in their waters. In order to increase public awareness a ship strike database and associated questionnaire have been developed. The data collected in Australia through the database is fully compatible with the IWC database and Australia recommends this approach to other countries in order to populate the IWC database.

Belgium commended Australia for this work on ship strikes and welcomed the creation of a regional database which replicates the design of the IWC database, thus facilitating the synchronization of the two databases. Other countries were encouraged to follow a similar approach. Belgium urged all member countries to produce National Ship Strike Reports, such as the one presented by Australia, where relevant.

Mexico highlighted some items from its Voluntary Report (IWC/64/CC20) concerning amendments to legislation, and powers to implement measures to avoid vessel strikes and ocean noise.

The USA presented a report of actions to reduce ship strikes summarised in its voluntary conservation report (IWC/64/CC5). This is also discussed under Item 9. The USA noted that collisions with vessels are a threat to all species of large whales. Two vessel routing proposals were submitted to, and endorsed by, the IMO in 2008 to reduce the risk of ship strikes to North Atlantic right whales. The proposals became effective on 1 June 2009. Together with measures to prevent entanglement of right whales in fishing gear and regulations to reduce ship strikes by slowing ships, these changes in vessel operations are a part of a comprehensive approach taken by the USA in its effort to help right whales recover.

The USA next introduced two new proposals, submitted to the IMO in 2012, to amend two existing Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) off the USA West Coast to reduce the likelihood of ship strike deaths and serious injury to blue and other large whales. These proposals are due to be considered by the IMO in July 2012.

- The first proposal would reduce the width of the separation zone in the TSS approaching Santa Barbara, CA, which will decrease the co-occurrence of vessels and blue and fin whales. Technological advances in navigation systems have alleviated concerns of an increased risk of vessel collisions due to a narrowed separation zones. Further, the

U.S. Coast Guard conducted a Port Access Route Study in 2011, which concluded that the burden imposed on shipping by the first proposed amendment is minimal while the potential benefits to large whales, particularly blue whales, may be significant.

- The second proposal for approach to San Francisco, CA, will serve to reduce the risk of marine casualties, reduce the likelihood of ship strikes with cetaceans, and also avoid interaction between fishing and commercial vessels.

#### **PANAMA TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEMES**

The Republic of Panama introduced a proposal (IWC/64/CC23rev) for the establishment of Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) and prevention of vessel collision with whales. The Republic of Panama is a leading maritime country and about 17,000 commercial vessels annually transit the Gulf of Panama. The number of Panamanian vessels has nearly doubled in 15 years, from 3,700 to 6,200 and with the expansion of the Panama Canal an increase in the number and size of vessels in the area is expected. Therefore, this initiative is aimed at improving navigational safety by reducing the risk of collisions of merchant ships traveling in opposite directions daily from Asia, the central Pacific and the west coasts of North, Central and South America. The specific establishment and implementation of TSS is one of the first steps towards the organisation of maritime traffic in the Gulf of Panama and other areas of commercial navigation in the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Panama.

The Panama Maritime Authority in conjunction with the Panama Canal Authority, the Maritime Chamber, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and the Marviva Foundation, has been working for several months on designing four two-way TSS, three for the Pacific and one for the Caribbean, to be presented to the International Maritime Organisation for their endorsement. The three Pacific schemes are expected to reduce the potential of ship collisions and contamination risk particularly along seven marine protected areas. Panama has recorded 13 whale casualties in two years, mostly of humpback whales. The TSS will be established in areas heavily used by several species of cetaceans, especially humpback whales from both the northern and southern hemispheres which winter in Central America and Panama (up to ~300 individuals per season from the Southern population visit Las Perlas Archipelago). Based on a temporal and spatial analysis of whales tagged with satellite transmitters and AIS transmissions from over 800 vessels, it is estimated that implementation of the scheme would reduce the potential areas of collision between ships and whales by ~93%.

In conclusion, the implementation of the traffic separation schemes in Panama is of vital importance for navigational safety as well as for the protection of sensitive ecosystems and whale population wintering in Panama. Panama would welcome any support or recommendations by the IWC and individual countries.

Many countries including Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile, Belgium, USA, Ecuador, New Zealand and the UK expressed support for the initiative by Panama on this critical issue and hope to see more details presented at the next meetings of the Scientific and Conservation Committees. Costa Rica has similar concerns and would like to discuss the matter in the Central American commission and regional biodiversity commissions. Ecuador noted a similar situation in the gulf of Guayaquil and considered this to be a helpful initiative.

#### **TENERIFE WORKSHOP IN OCTOBER 2012**

Aware of IWC interest in this area, Spain presented a proposal (IWC/64/CC18) to hold an international Workshop on maritime transport and biodiversity conservation. The Workshop will seek synergy and other forms collaboration. A specific aim of the project is to study and mitigate accidents affecting marine biodiversity, especially the impacts on cetaceans and to develop a programme for communication and training for the maritime industry. It is hoped that shipping industry leaders, scientists and other stakeholders will participate in the Workshop to be held from 24-26 October 2012 in Tenerife, Spain. More information can be obtained by contacting Ana Tejedor (ana@kaimarineservices.com).

The USA supported the Workshop proposal by Spain and noted that two of its leading experts on ship strikes are participating on the steering committee and will be making presentations at the Workshop. The Workshop is the culmination of several years of discussion on educating mariners about the threat of ship strikes and environmentally sensitive areas. The goals are to identify the best way to get information to mariners and to determine the most relevant information to pass on to them. The USA has learned from implementing various North Atlantic right whale protection measures in USA waters, and looks forward to working with Spain and other interested governments to effect a reduction of ship strikes. The USA recognized this Workshop will have strong ties to the IMO, which it views as an important step in furthering IWC-IMO cooperation.

France and Belgium welcomed the Workshop. Belgium recalled that the *Joint IWC-ACCOBAMS Workshop on Ship Strike Mitigation*, held in Beaulieu, France in 2010 focused on the increasing problem between high speed traffic and cetaceans in the Canary Islands, and suggested that Tenerife was a most appropriate location for the Workshop. The Beaulieu workshop report (IWC/63/8) will be a useful source of information for the Tenerife Workshop and IWC/63/16 (*"Follow-up on recommendations made and measures identified at the Beaulieu Workshop"*) can be used as a guide for further negotiations

with the maritime industry Belgium also suggested that every effort should be made to achieve participation of ferry industry operators from the Canary Islands at the Workshop.

**WORKSHOPS: DISENTANGLEMENT AND SHIP STRIKES IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN**

The USA summarised its joint proposal with the Dominican Republic, France, Mexico and Panama (IWC/64/WKM&AWI 12), for the IWC to work with UNEP, CEP and SPAW to conduct a series of three workshops on disentanglement and ship strikes in the wider Caribbean, focusing on the interdisciplinary ship strike workshop planned for 2013. This item was discussed in more detail by the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues. The USA hopes to expand partnership for this effort to other interested IWC parties and the IMO. The agenda, terms of reference and list of participants for this workshop have not yet been developed, and the USA hopes the IWC will convene an IWC-led steering committee to work with UNEP and SPAW to host this workshop in 2013. The USA recognised that this proposal originated from Alexandre de Lichtervelde's work and his communication with UNEP and SPAW.

France, the Netherlands, Argentina and Mexico expressed support for the workshops and the Netherlands noted that it would be happy to participate and would look into financial contributions.

A representative of UNEP and SPAW-RAC expressed strong support for the proposed workshops on entanglement and ship strikes noting that the French Agoa sanctuary for the protection of marine mammal is also supportive and will bring technical, logistical and financial support to the proposal. In relation to vessel strikes, the marine mammal action plan approved by the SPAW parties on threats to marine mammals in the wider Caribbean region, states the following key objectives:

- (1) Improve understanding. To identify high risk areas for vessel strikes in each country.
- (2) Impact assessment. To assess the magnitude of vessel strikes in the Wider Caribbean Region.
- (3) Impact minimisation. To stimulate on-going, and initiate new, actions at the regional, national and local level to reduce the frequency of vessel strikes.

The UNEP and SPAW-RAC representative noted that the extent of this problem in the Wider Caribbean Region is poorly understood, both because of lack of data and because a better understanding of the maritime traffic in the region is needed. To achieve this, UNEP and SPAW-RAC propose a collaboration with the IWC in order to better understand the situation in the Wider Caribbean Region and find appropriate solutions to this issue.

The Conservation Committee thanked the UNEP and SPAW-RAC representative for the offer of collaborative engagement and the Secretariat looked forward to formalising the agreement in the coming months.

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Conservation Committee **endorsed** a suggestion from the Chair to develop a strategic plan for ship strikes which might include data gathering and mitigation. Belgium considered that a strategic plan would help to ensure the effectiveness of the IWC ship strikes database.

**4.4 Appointment of Chair for the Ship Strikes Working Group**

The Conservation Committee was pleased to appoint Belgium as Chair of the Ship Strikes Working Group and acknowledged the work of Alexandre de Lichtervelde and of Belgium on ship strikes in the past.

**5. SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES IN CHILE AND PERU**

At its meeting in 2008, the Conservation Committee had received reports from a Workshop on the status of southern right whales from Chile-Peru and from the Scientific Committee. At that meeting the Conservation Committee: (1) stated the importance of continuing work on the status of right whales and recommended that this issue remain a high priority in the future work of the Scientific Committee; and (2) agreed the item be retained on the Conservation Committee's agenda.

This item contains information concerning Southern right whales in Chile and Peru other than information related to Conservation Action Plans which are discussed under Item 8.

**5.1 Report from the Scientific Committee**

To clarify the status of this Critically Endangered and poorly understood population and to identify any threats and possible mitigation actions, the IWC Workshop on Southern Right Whales and then the Scientific Committee, **recommended** that surveys, photo-identification and genetic studies should be conducted. Specifically, the following three steps were recommended:

- (1) Determine geographical/temporal areas where quantitative studies can best be conducted. This can be done by analysing existing historical whaling and sighting data and using appropriate temporal/geographical spatial modelling;
- (2) Design a systematic aerial survey programme to cover potential calving or nursery areas, and
- (3) Further consider stock structure issues by examining existing genetic samples (including museum specimens where possible) and collect new samples from southern Chile/Argentina.

## **5.2 Update on Progress**

Chile reported on the difficulties associated with monitoring this very endangered population of southern right whales that is estimated to include less than 50 mature individuals. New information that was reported to the Scientific Committee this year highlights the importance of the waters of Isla de Chiloe for the species. Actions proposed in the CMP have begun to identify the animals and areas of concentration. Previously it had taken 2-3 days for reports of a sighting to be received, making it very difficult to locate the animal subsequently. The use of mobile technology is being implemented in joint work between the Chilean Navy and the NGO Centro de Conservacion Cetacea to enable sightings to be reported in real time and Chile thanked Australia for the provision of this new technology. Considering the critically endangered status of this population, it was requested that this item remain on the agenda of the Conservation Committee.

## **6. WHALEWATCHING**

In 2011 the Commission endorsed an IWC Five Year Strategic Plan for Whalewatching pending review by the Scientific Committee of the Plan's research and assessment objectives prior to the Commission's meeting in 2012. Also in 2011 the Commission reviewed and updated the terms of reference for the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whalewatching (SWG-WW), and expanded its membership to include two members of the Scientific Committee.

### **6.1 Report from the Scientific Committee**

The Chair of the Scientific Committee introduced the report of their sub-committee on whalewatching which is given as IWC/64/Rep 1, Annex M. Scientific aspects of whalewatching have been discussed formally by the Scientific Committee in response to Commission Resolution 1994-14.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACTS OF WHALEWATCHING ON CETACEANS (SEE IWC/64/REP 1 ITEM 15.1)**

A number of papers on the possible effects of whalewatching on cetaceans were considered. The Scientific Committee expressed concern regarding the intense and uncontrolled dolphin watching in Bocas Del Toro and **strongly requested** the Panamanian authorities enforce its relevant whalewatching regulation. This especially applies to requirements regarding boat numbers and approach speed and distances. The Committee **recommended** continued research to monitor this dolphin population and the impacts of tourism on it. In this regard it **welcomed** the continuation of the Cooperative Agreement between Argentina and Panama to develop and conduct operator training workshops.

A modelling approach was presented to examine the potential effects of dolphin watching. The authors used health status to link individual behavioural changes to births and deaths, assuming health can moderate these. The Committee **welcomed** the use of modelling to address this issue and suggested that Bocas del Toro, Panama, might be a location where this model could be tested.

The Scientific Committee also reviewed whalewatching off Central America. Within this region, only Costa Rica and Panama have organised their industries with tour operator associations. In Guatemala and Nicaragua, whalewatching operators are becoming organised. The Scientific Committee was pleased to learn that workshops to train and certify operators in best practices are being held twice a year in Costa Rica. In Panama, operator training started in 2006 and will continue this year. Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador do not yet have organised whalewatching operators or associations or whalewatching regulations.

#### **REVIEW REPORTS FROM INTERSESSIONAL WORKING GROUPS**

The objective of the LaWE (Large-Scale Whalewatching Experiment) project is to understand the mechanisms and possible effects of whalewatching on cetacean populations, in order to define a framework for integrated and adaptive management. Progress is being made and an initial analysis was received based on information from 10 researchers. A modelling approach found there was a consistent response across species in path linearity and changes in resting behaviour. In addition smaller sized species and small sized populations were less likely to rest in the presence of whalewatching vessels.

Work continued intersessionally to develop a database to keep track of the details of whalewatching operations world-wide. The database developer is working towards putting the current version on the Commission's server for evaluation by the Committee next year.

A questionnaire for operators of swim-with-whale operations (Rose *et al.* 2007) was field-tested on three companies in the Dominican Republic in early 2012. Their responses indicated that the questionnaire was appropriate and sufficient to present more widely to operators. Further work will be undertaken intersessionally to distribute the questionnaire to more operators and report results in two years, at IWC/66.

#### **OTHER ISSUES**

The Committee reviewed scientific aspects of the Commission's Five Year Strategic Plan for Whalewatching. Detailed comments can be found in IWC/64/Rep 1, Annex M, Appendix 3. The Committee **agreed** that the goal of its review was to offer the Commission advice that will lead to results that benefit both the work of the Conservation Committee's SWG on whalewatching as well as the Scientific Committee's work. While the Scientific Committee focussed its input on Objectives 1 (Research) and 2 (Assessment), it noted that all five objectives of the Strategic Plan could benefit from further cooperation between the two Committees. This is particularly true in regards to elements such as regulatory frameworks, where the Scientific Committee can contribute expertise, data, and other advice. The Committee noted the ambitious scale of the science-related work programme found in the Strategic Plan. In particular some work identified as short-term should be reclassified as medium to long-term. The Committee also **recommended** that the Commission address issues that arise uniquely from operations that allow customers to swim with or feed cetaceans. An intersessional correspondence group was established to discuss and develop guiding principles with regard to Action 1.1 in the Strategic Plan. Action 1.2 should be completed intersessionally, with results reported to the next meeting.

The Scientific Committee received the report of the regional Workshop on marine mammal watching held in October 2011 in Panama City, Panama (IWC/64/CC17). This brought together marine mammal tour operators and government regulators from across the wider Caribbean region. Several papers were also presented to the Scientific Committee that utilized data collected on whalewatching boats, including data collected during whalewatching trips in Samaná Bay, Dominican Republic and along the South Pacific coast of Costa Rica.

It was noted that the compendium of regulations and guidelines on the Commission website<sup>1</sup> was open to additions and updates. The Scientific Committee **agreed** to revisit them on a more regular basis to ensure they remain representative of 'best practices' and to address them under the standing agenda item on reviewing whalewatching guidelines and regulations.

The Scientific Committee is concerned about the potential threat of unregulated whalewatching to the Arabian humpback whale population in addition to the ship strikes discussed under Item 4.1. The Scientific Committee **strongly recommended** that operator training workshops should be conducted with a view to promoting best practice for whalewatching and to aid the interpretation and implementation of revised whalewatching guidelines. A funding proposal has been reported to the Budgetary Sub-committee.

The Conservation Committee commended and thanked the Scientific Committee for its work. Belgium noted that the subcommittee's expertise had again resulted in fruitful collaboration with experts from South America. Belgium was pleased to see the new item dealing with "emerging whalewatching industries of concern" and suggested that the SWG-WW consider the questions and topics arising from this field of work.

Regarding the problem of dolphin watching in Bocas Del Toro, Argentina reported on an agreement between Argentina and Panama to develop a two year cooperation programme to work on capacity building and training workshops on whalewatching for tour operators, fishermen and scientists from Panama. The Fondo Argentino de Cooperación Sur-Sur y Triangular in collaboration with the Autoridad Panameña de Turismo (ATP) developed a whalewatching capacity building workshop in Bocas del Toro, Panama in September 2011 to train whalewatching operators and to reduce the impact on a resident population of Bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*). A second part of this programme will be developed in later in 2012.

#### **6.2 Report from the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on Whalewatching**

The Chair of the Standing Working Group on Whalewatching (SWG-WW) gave the report of the SWG-WW (IWC/64/CC6), including the activities over the past year, during which the group examined each section of the 5-Year Strategic Plan (see IWC/64/CC6 Annex B). The SWG-WW developed recommendations on how to move forward on actions that were outside the focus of the Scientific Committee review, and on which actions should be implemented through the web-based living handbook. The SWG-WW also decided that it would greatly benefit from industry input, and recommended the inclusion of two industry representatives on the SWG-WW as *ex officio* participants. Nominees for the first two representatives were recommended to come from Australia and Mexico, with potential funding support from the IWC.

---

<sup>1</sup> [A Review of Whalewatch Guidelines](#)

The SWG-WW Chair then outlined the future work the SWG-WW, and expressed hope that the Plan will be finalised at IWC/64. To allow for a possible Commission decision to move to biennial meetings at IWC/64, the SWG-WW proposed a plan of work for the potential intersessional period of 2012-14. The following four **recommendations** of the SWG-WW were highlighted:

- (1) The addition and potential funding of two *ex officio* industry representatives to the SWG-WW;
- (2) The two requested documents from the Secretariat to facilitate implementation of the Plan;
- (3) The SWG-WW work plan for the proposed intersessional period of 2012-2014; and
- (4) Adoption, after discussion, of any accepted changes to the 5-Year Strategic Plan suggested by the Scientific Committee.

The SWG-WW Chair also presented document IWC/64/CC24, which highlighted the changes to the Action Plan 2011-2016 based on the Scientific Committee recommendations.

The Conservation Committee thanked the SWG-WW for the good progress that has taken place on the co-ordination of work on whalewatching during the intersessional period and thanked Ryan Wulff for his leadership of this important group.

### **6.3 Committee discussions and recommendations**

Many delegates expressed support for the work of the SWG including the recommendations and for the 5-year Action plan.

Belgium referred to the benefits of whalewatching for local communities, but noted that whalewatching also can have negative impacts on the animals. Thus, planning and management is warranted, especially for endangered whale populations like the Arabian Sea humpbacks. Belgium welcomes the production of the Handbook on whalewatching, because it focuses on the development of whalewatching tourism as a sustainable use of cetaceans. Furthermore, Belgium welcomes the increased dialogue between the Scientific and Conservation Committees in the SWG-WW as a follow up of the development of the 5 Year Strategic Plan, in order to make full use of the Scientific Committee's expertise on whale watching matters and further develop science-based management options for whale watching

Australia expressed its willingness to take an active role in seeking to trial the draft survey in the Pacific and, in addition, was pleased to nominate an *ex officio* industry representative to the working group. Details will be given to the Secretariat later.

Sweden drew attention to the Scientific Committee recommendation that the Commission should address issues that arise uniquely from operations that allow customers to swim with or feed cetaceans. The USA acknowledged that this item is not specifically written into the action plan as outlined, but that the issue had been discussed within the SWG. Following a suggestion from the Chair of the Scientific Committee, he agreed that swim with whale and feed with whales should be added into the general principles of the Note section of 1.1 of the 5-year strategic plan with the addition of another letter there.

The Russian Federation observed that that whalewatching is a very developed industry of great monetary value and noted that it would like to see the action plan include an analysis to show the income and benefits to local communities where whalewatching operates. Whalewatching is often run by foreign operators and local communities may receive little benefit.

Several countries including Argentina, New Zealand, Ecuador, Chile, the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica reported that much of the benefit from whalewatching in their countries does go to local communities. Argentina noted that whalewatching in Argentina and the rest of Latin America involved mainly former fishermen who are now whalewatching skippers or company owners, so most of the income goes to coastal communities. New Zealand's most successful story of whalewatching is from Kaikoura which is organized and run by locals and has won four international tourism awards. In Costa Rica more than 80% of whalewatching proceeds go to local communities.

The USA highlighted some items from the revised Action Plan listed in IWC/64/CC24: where appropriate developing principles should be precautionary and minimize potential impacts; efforts should be made to maintain consistency; a few actions were moved from short to medium or long term; the term 'where appropriate' is added to 'best possible practice' for certain sectors. The Scientific Committee has been added to the list of possible participants for objectives 3 and 5 noting that they could also contribute to the objectives and actions.

Mexico reported it has amended its whalewatching regulations as listed in IWC/64/CC20, based on precautionary principles. Chile reported that it has adopted regulations for Whalewatching tourism, taking into account one of the recommendations of the Scientific Committee in 2007 for the southern right whale, to only allow observation from land.



The Conservation Committee **endorsed the recommendations** of the SWG-WW and the **adopted** the strategic plan.

## **7. WHALE SANCTUARIES**

### **7.1 Report from the Scientific Committee**

The Scientific Committee did not receive any documents on IWC Sanctuaries, although it did receive information from the second International Conference related to marine mammal protected areas held in Martinique (see Item 7.2).

### **7.2 Committee discussions and recommendations**

The Chair noted that there were no new proposals for sanctuaries for review this year.

#### **THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MARINE MAMMAL PROTECTED AREAS (ICMMPA 2),**

France presented the summary report (SC/64/O1) of the Second International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas, held in Martinique, 7-11 November 2011 which sought solutions to shared problems related to marine mammal conservation and to MMPA network and site design, creation and management. A secondary goal was to orient those working in MMPAs to set those protected areas in the broader context of marine management, in order to ensure that MMPAs are not marginalized as marine spatial planning work advances. The conference was co-hosted by the French MPA Agency (Agence des aires marines protégées) and the USA (NOAA) and was supported by fifteen sponsors and many other organisations.

The conference theme of “Endangered Spaces, Endangered Species” was explored in keynote talks, panels and workshops focusing on monk seals, sirenians, river dolphins and other small and large cetaceans. Special attention was given to the endangered vaquita. Other issues considered included: special considerations for particularly endangered marine mammals; refining understanding of marine mammal critical habitat and hotspots to inform MMPA designation; using marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based management to address broad threats to marine mammals; managing MMPAs for localized threats and mitigation by spatial protection and other means; development of MMPAs in the wider Caribbean region; and regional cooperation for MMPA scientific and technical networking. The proceedings will be available shortly and a third meeting is planned for two years’ time.

Several nations expressed appreciation to France for organizing an excellent and productive conference. The USA also highlighted the Sister Sanctuary agreement between the USA and France signed in September 2011, to protect humpback whales that migrate between the U.S. Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the Agoa Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the Caribbean's French Antilles.

#### **SOUTH ATLANTIC WHALE SANCTUARY (SAWS).**

Argentina noted that it has supported the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary since it was first proposed by Brazil in 2000. The renewed proposal (IWC/64/8) presented jointly by Brazil, South Africa, Uruguay and Argentina has a very clear stated goal which is to promote and establish a non-lethal management regime for cetacean resources in the area it encompasses.

Argentina prohibited the hunt of marine mammals in the 1950's and has a long whale-watching tradition which began in 1983 in the world famous Southern Right whale nursery winter ground of Peninsula Valdes. Hence Argentina strongly supports the non-lethal use of cetaceans. The SAWS will (i) provide long-term protection and recovery of cetacean populations; (ii) support research on depleted stocks and their habitats; (iii) promote regional conservation measures and educational activities, and contribute to the development of environmentally friendly tourism along the South American and African coasts.

Several nations reiterated their support for the SAWS and for the principle of sanctuaries. The USA observed that sanctuaries provide opportunities to conduct non-lethal research on undisturbed whale stocks, including studies on the life history and population dynamics of whales, and many benefit local coastal communities.

Norway said that the Norwegian attitude toward whale sanctuaries and MPAs in fisheries are well known; Norway supports such management instruments only if scientifically justified. It considered that there is no scientific justification of SAWS and thus cannot support it

Denmark noted that it was considering looking positively on the South Atlantic Sanctuary but has not come to a final position yet. The UK and Belgium expressed their support for the creation of sanctuaries.

## **8. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS**

At IWC/63 in 2011 the Commission endorsed a Conservation Committee recommendation to establish a Small Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (SWG-CMP) with membership drawn from both the Conservation Committee and the Scientific Committee.

### **8.1 Report from the Scientific Committee**

#### **ARABIAN SEA HUMPBAC WHALES**

The Chair of the Scientific Committee noted that the Arabian Sea humpback population had been identified by the Scientific Committee as a likely candidate for an IWC Conservation Management Plan. To facilitate this process an Intersessional Working Group was formed last year (IWC, 2012). The Scientific Committee noted the good progress that has been made in assembling the documentation required to submit a proposal to the IWC for a candidate CMP. Since a key component of this, and any plan, is that it is supported by a broad range of stakeholders including range state governments, the Scientific Committee welcomed the work undertaken thus far and strongly **recommended** that discussions between scientists and relevant range state governments continue to further progress the Conservation Management Plan process.

#### **SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES**

Last year the Commission agreed that Southern right whales of South America should be the subject of IWC Conservation Management Plans (IWC, 2012). Two draft plans were available during the Scientific Committee meeting, one for Southwest Atlantic southern right whales (IWC/64/CC7Rev1) and one for Southeastern Pacific southern right whales (IWC/64/CC9). The Committee examined these draft Conservation Management Plans for their scientific content and related actions and found them to be in accord with the results and recommendations from the Committees Workshops on the Status of Southern Right Whales (SC/64/Rep3) and the southern right whale die-off (IWC, 2011).

#### **WESTERN NORTH PACIFIC GRAY WHALES**

It was noted that the CMP for Western North Pacific gray whales is already in action and that one of the plan recommendations was for satellite tagging. Several whales have been tagged and the CMP is being updated using data from these whales.

### **8.2 Report from the Conservation Committee's Standing Working Group on CMPs**

Australia introduced the report of Standing Working Group (SWG) on CMPs (IWC/64/CC12rev). The report of the group includes a number of recommendations submitted to IWC63. The Commission had limited time to fully consider the CMP documents last year so they are submitted again here, noting that two of the recommendations have already occurred:

- that the CMP guidelines, templates and funding principles presented in IWC/63/CC5 be adopted;
- that these documents be placed on the IWC website for use by members wishing to undertake a CMP;
- that the Small Advisory Group on CMPs be reconstituted as a Standing Working Group on CMPs (has occurred);
- that the terms of reference for the CMP Working Group, contained in IWC/63/CC5, be adopted (has occurred);
- that the Scientific Committee be invited to undertake an analysis of priority candidates for future CMPs; and
- that the Conservation Committee be tasked with undertaking an inventory of cetacean conservation measures currently in place or underway in jurisdictions, on a regional basis.

Regarding the request to the Scientific Committee for an analysis of priority candidates for future CMPs, the useful work reported above was acknowledged, but it was suggested that it would be useful if the Scientific Committee looked at this issue more broadly in order to provide a preliminary priority list of areas that would benefit from CMPs in future years.

In addition the SWG recommended that the Conservation Committee endorse the following recommendations for cetacean conservation measures in the Pacific Islands Region, with a focus on Oceania humpback whales, for consideration by the Commission:

- that the Commission note the Review of Measures for Marine Mammal Conservation, Protection and Management in the Pacific Islands Region in 2007 by IFAW and SPREP;
- that the Commission acknowledge the significant cetacean conservation measures currently in place to protect cetaceans in the Pacific Islands region, as identified in this inventory;
- that the Commission recognise the leadership of SPREP in advancing cetacean conservation in the Pacific Islands region, including through implementation of its regional Whale and Dolphin Action Plan and its partnership with CMS on the CMS Pacific Cetaceans MoU, and the important role of organisations such as South Pacific Whale Research Consortium;
- that the Secretariat write to SPREP advising it of the work of the Standing Working Group on CMPs and inviting SPREP to participate as an observer to the Working Group;

- subject to the views of SPREP and the Pacific Island Contracting Parties, if this inventory is considered a useful model it is proposed that the Chair of the Working Group contact SPREP with a view to exploring options to further refine the inventory;
- that similar regional inventories be developed for regions around the globe as part of the work of the Conservation Committee; and
- that regional inventories of cetacean conservation measures should be updated periodically (every 5-10 years or as appropriate).

The Conservation Committee thanked the SWG for its work and **endorsed all of the above the recommendations** including the request for the Scientific Committee to provide a priority list and the invitation to SPREP to participate as an observer. The Secretariat confirmed that they could implement the request to SPREP.

The USA expressed continued support for conservation management plans as they reaffirm the conservation objective of the Convention and improve the Commission's conservation work.

### **8.3 Committee discussions and recommendations**

Last year the IWC agreed to nominate the South American southern right whale population for a Conservation Management Plan (IWC/63/CC4). Workshops held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in September 2011 recommended that the plan be separated into two, one for the Southwest Atlantic Southern right whale and one for the Southeast Pacific right whales.

#### **SOUTHWEST ATLANTIC SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES**

Argentina introduced IWC/64/CC7rev1, the Conservation Management Plan for the Southwest Atlantic Southern right whale (CMP SWA SRW). A Workshop was held in Buenos Aires from 19–20 September 2011 to begin the development of the CMP, at which three documents were considered: (i) Report of the Southern Right Whale Die-Off Workshop (IWC, 2011), (ii) Draft Proposal for an Action Plan for the Recovery of Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whales in Chile (IWC/63/CC21Rev) and (iii) Conclusions and outcomes of the IWC Southern Right Whale Assessment workshop held in Buenos Aires from 13-6 September 2011. The overall objective of the CMP is to protect the southern right whale habitat and minimise anthropogenic threats to maximize the likelihood that southern right whales will recover to healthy levels and recolonise their historical range.

The following nine high priority actions were identified ((i) implementation of the CMP; (ii) develop a strategy to increase public awareness and build capacity in range states; (iii) determine movements, migration routes and location of feeding ground(s) through satellite telemetry; (iv) development of a GIS (META) database on information on human activities that might have an adverse impact on whales; (v) ensure long-term monitoring of abundance, trends and biological parameters through photo-identification and biopsy sampling; (vi) enhance the existing stranding networks including the capacity for undertaking post-mortems; (vii) development of a regional entanglement response strategy; (viii) develop and implement a strategy to minimise kelp gull harassment; and (ix) establishment of an expert advisory panel). The most critical and urgent action is the implementation of the CMP SWA SRW. Funding must be found for this action as soon as possible to appoint a Coordinator and set up the Steering Group to ensure that the Conservation Plan moves ahead in a timely fashion. The estimated cost would be about £50,000, to include funding of the first meeting of the interim steering committee and the salary of a coordinator.

The Committee thanked Argentina for the excellent work undertaken. The USA indicated that it is important to start with populations that are either critically endangered like the right whales found off Chile and Peru or ones like right whales in the South Atlantic where there is a special conservation need.

The Conservation Committee **endorsed** the CMP for the Southwest Atlantic Southern right whale and **recommends** it to the Commission, noting the need for funding.

#### **SOUTHEAST PACIFIC SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALES**

Chile introduced the CMP for Southeast Pacific right whales (IWC/64/CC9), a species which is critically endangered and is estimated to include less than 50 mature individuals. The CMP is based on Chile's national plan of action submitted last year (IWC/63/CC21rev), so some actions of the plan are already operational. The objective is to take steps which will allow the species to withstand both environmental and anthropogenic impacts and ensure its long term survival. Lack of information is the biggest limitation to protection, so the short term objectives focus on (1) compiling a baseline of information to include in particular population size and area of concentration, breeding and feeding grounds, stock structure, etc. (2) conducting a detailed assessment of potential impacts in identified areas of concentration and (3) developing specific mitigations despite the shortage of information.

The work done during the Argentina workshop and by the drafting group identified the following priority actions: implementation of the Conservation and Management Plan and establishment of a Co-ordinator and Steering Committee; development of a web-based exchange of scientific information; development of a strategy to increase public awareness and build capacity in range states; create capacities in coastal communities on species identification and sightings reporting and documentation; development of a web-based platform to report southern right whale sightings; increase documentation of sightings and photo-identification of individuals; start collection of genetic samples; identify breeding area(s) for southern right whales; ensure long-term monitoring of distribution, abundance and trends of southern right whales; ensure long-term monitoring of potential threats and effectiveness of mitigation measures; release entangled whales and prevent entanglements; develop and implement contingency plan to afford maximum protection when a sighting is recorded; and inclusion of right whale conservation considerations and mitigation measures in the Environmental Impact Evaluation and Permitting System for Large-Scale Coastal/Marine Projects

The Conservation Committee thanked Chile for the excellent work, **endorsed** the CMP for the Southeast Pacific right whale and **recommends** it to the Commission.

## **9. NATIONAL REPORTS ON CETACEAN CONSERVATION**

Several countries had submitted voluntary national cetacean conservation reports: Argentina (IWC/64/CC15), Australia (IWC/64/CC4), Brazil (IWC/64/CC22), Chile (IWC/64/CC21), France (IWC/64/CC14), Mexico (IWC/64/CC20), New Zealand (IWC/64/CC19), UK (IWC/64/CC8) and USA (IWC/64/CC5). The Committee welcomed these reports, many parts of which have been discussed under earlier items. More countries were encouraged to submit reports in future.

Australia was pleased to highlight the completion of a national network of marine reserves around Australia's entire EEZ which was announced only two weeks ago. This integrative representative network fulfilled Australia's commitment under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to establish representative networks by 2012. It will be of benefit to cetaceans by identifying key critical habitats and putting in place appropriate degrees of protection to enable the sustainability of those populations, and underlines the importance Australia gives to MPAs.

Ecuador reported that whales have been protected in Ecuador since 1990, but three coastal MPAs have recently been created to protect cetacean habitats, especially humpback whales and bottlenose dolphins. A network on stranding is being implemented. In 2007 Ecuador set up a commission for supervision of whale and dolphin watching to ensure responsible activities and including training for the ship captains and sailors.

Argentina highlighted a Workshop for Development of a National Action Plan to reduce the by-catch of Marine mammals hosted by Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable and Subsecretaría de Pesca y Acuicultura from 27–29 September 2011 attended by national and provincial governmental agencies, scientists, academics and non-governmental organisations. A draft version of the plan is expected to be finished and approved during this year.

During 2011 the Southern Right Whale Health Monitoring Program (SRWHMP) recorded and collected samples for further analysis from a total of 61 stranded whales at Península Valdés, including three juveniles and 58 calves.

An action plan has been developed to minimize the problems of kelp gull attacks on southern right whales from the Southwest Atlantic population in the area of the Peninsula Valdes. This issue was identified as a priority in the IWC CMP of Southern right whales. The main components of the plan are: strategic communication about the interaction between both species, the development of a pilot study to remove kelp gulls with technical assistance from the Centro Nacional Patagónico, the eradication of open dumps, the continued monitoring of population trends of both species and monitoring the rate of gull-whale interactions.

In 2011 Costa Rica set up its first Marine Management Area which is part of the World Wildlife Union (no. 4 category) and close to the Cocos Island Park. A management plan is being developed in which long line fishing would be allowed but industrial tuna fishing prohibited. They plan to document the abundance and patterns of behaviour of cetacean species and impacts from human activities. Costa Rica also gave notice of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meso American Conference on MPAs being planned for Costa Rica in August 2013, whose purpose is to strengthen MPAs, with an emphasis on whales. IWC support will be requested nearer the time.

New Zealand reported on the continuation of its humpback whale research throughout the South Pacific and its extensive research on Southern Right Whales. New Zealand supports the IWC Southern Ocean Research Partnership (SORP) and participated in the two pygmy Blue whale research projects this season.

New Zealand is proposing to extend the Marine Mammal Sanctuary protected area off the North Island in order to protect the endemic Maui's dolphin. This step resulted from a Threats Management Workshop held in early June 2012 following the catch of a Maui's dolphin in a gillnet in January and the critical state of the population.

New Zealand was pleased to report that the survival of Hector's dolphins at Banks Peninsula has improved by 5.4% since the creation of a Marine Mammal Sanctuary in the area in 1988. The Sanctuary and local fishing regulations have significantly slowed the rate of decline of this population. These protection measures are also of benefit to seabirds and fish populations.

Argentina requested further details of New Zealand's work on Maui's dolphins because they have similar problems with entanglements. New Zealand clarified that the proposed extension also includes fisheries measures and will ban sett nets within the area. Argentina and New Zealand agreed to continue discussions outside of the meeting.

The USA gave a PowerPoint presentation on conservation efforts related to ship strike mitigation and ocean noise, noting that details on a number of additional conservation initiatives of the USA are summarized in its Voluntary Conservation Report (IWC/64/CC5). The USA described its successful 2009 efforts utilising ship traffic and whale density data supporting a new Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) for ships transiting through the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. The USA noted that it conducted a similar analysis in 2011 to support a proposal for two updated TSS's on the USA West Coast, which will be reviewed by the IMO during its meeting from 2-6 July 2012. The USA also announced the release of the free "Right Whale App" for iPad or iPhone, designed to make mariners better aware of the ship strike reduction initiatives on the East Coast, thereby increasing mariner compliance and right whale protection.

The USA presented information on tools used to evaluate the impacts of human-induced noise on cetaceans. In particular, two mapping methods were used to depict (1) temporal, spatial, and spectral characteristics of underwater noise, and (2) regional time- and species-specific cetacean density. The USA plans to use these mapping tools to provide a more robust, comprehensive, and context-specific way to inform management decisions, with the ultimate goal of assisting ocean planning efforts.

In response to a question from Belgium, the USA noted that the mapping work currently focused only on the US EEZ but the next steps include work with other partners/organisations and the USA welcomed further discussion of this issue.

## **10. MARINE DEBRIS**

At IWC/63 in 2011 the Commission endorsed a recommendation from the Conservation Committee to include a standing item on Marine Debris on the Committee's agenda.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee noted that marine debris is a growing concern for marine wildlife in general, but its interactions with cetaceans are poorly understood. To begin investigating these interactions the Scientific Committee reviewed several papers on marine debris. In general four key questions were identified: (1) how to distinguish cetaceans that have died in active fishing gear versus those entangled what is called 'ghost' fishing gear; (2) how to identify the 'worst culprit' types of ghost fishing gear causing entanglement; (3) how to investigate the potential accumulation of debris in the deep sea feeding areas of beaked and sperm whales; and (4) how to investigate the impacts of microplastics on cetaceans, including baleen whales (see Fossi *et al.*, 2012).

To address these issues the Scientific Committee recommended that a workshop on marine debris and cetaceans be held next year (IWC/64/Rep1 Annex K, Appendix 3). The primary aim of this workshop would be to determine how to best investigate quantitatively the ways in which marine debris is affecting cetaceans and how best to monitor and mitigate for these effects. The workshop could also consider how best to develop a centralised database to collate cases of debris interactions, including the development of standardised criteria for data to allow more certain identification of the types of debris and the interactions involved.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee also referred to the work being undertaken in the USA, Korea and Japan and the Steering Group for the IWC-POWER cruises who are investigating how those cruises can contribute to international efforts to collect more information on marine debris (see also IWC/64/Rep1 Annex G).

Several countries expressed appreciation for the work being done by the Scientific Committee on marine debris and fully supported the proposed workshop. They recognised that this issue is a significant and growing threat to marine ecosystems and is still poorly understood. Belgium noted that entanglement in marine debris, the health status of cetaceans and ship strikes are all interrelated, and there are likely to be both accumulative and synergistic effects of these threats.

Australia suggested that the workshop be held jointly by the Scientific and Conservation Committees in order to encompass both scientific and management aspects of the problem of marine debris.

The UK and Australia drew attention to the recent Rio Ocean declaration (in the outcomes document of 'The Future We Want', para. 163) which calls on all nations to take action on Marine Pollution. The IWC should cooperate with other international organisations to address this threat.

Argentina referred to a paper by Denuncio et al., 2011 on the ingestion of plastic debris (PD) in 28% of 106 Franciscana dolphins incidentally captured in artisanal fisheries on its northern coast. PD ingestion was more frequent in estuarine (34.6%) than in marine (19.2%) environments, but the type of debris was similar. Packaging debris was found in 64.3% of the dolphins, with 35.7% ingesting fishery gear fragments and 25% from unknown sources.

The USA provided information on a new programme aimed at combating the problem of derelict fishing gear called "Fishing for Energy" and encouraged interested delegations to join the initiative, indicating that more information will be available next week at the IWC expo.

The Conservation Committee **endorsed** the proposal for a joint workshop by the Scientific and Conservation Committees.

#### **11. PROGRESS UNDER THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR SMALL CETACEAN CONSERVATION RESEARCH**

In 2011 the Conservation Committee received a strong recommendation from the Scientific Committee's Sub-committee on small cetaceans for funding of nine high-standard research and conservation projects under the Commission's voluntary fund. All of the projects are aimed at improving conservation outcomes for small cetacean species and populations threatened or especially vulnerable to human activities.

The Chair of the Scientific Committee's sub-committee on Small Cetaceans gave an update on the current status of the Voluntary Fund for Small Cetacean Conservation and Research. Contributions received during the past year had enabled all nine projects to be funded and these were outlined in the PowerPoint presentation ([http://www.iwcoffice.org/documents/commission/IWC64docs/SMFund\\_CC\\_rev2.ppt](http://www.iwcoffice.org/documents/commission/IWC64docs/SMFund_CC_rev2.ppt)) and are listed below. Particular emphasis was given to the conservation and capacity building aspects of each project.

- (1) "Ecology, status, fisheries interactions and conservation of coastal indo-pacific humpback and bottlenose dolphins on the west coast of Madagascar". Work on this project is on-going.
- (2) "Abundance and distribution of the Atlantic Humpback dolphin in Gabon and Congo". An extended summary on progress of this project is given in SC/64/SM22.
- (3) "Estimating Abundance of an isolated population of the threatened Franciscana: Moving towards conservation Actions" has been successfully completed and is reported in SC/64/SM17.
- (4) The Sarawak Dolphin Project is a long-term study carried out in Malaysia. The IWC provided a one-year grant to help data collection.
- (5) "Genetic and demographic assessment of dolphins taken in live-capture and traditional drive-hunt in the Solomon Islands". A detailed preliminary report is given in SC/64/SM23.
- (6) "Assessment of alternative fishing gear for replacing gillnets that cause bycatch of vaquita in the Upper Gulf of California, Mexico".
- (7) "Investigation of population identity of Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins in the northern Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh and implications for population-level conservation and taxonomy of the species". This is a 2-year project.
- (8) "Identifying conservation solutions for the Yangtze (China) finless porpoise through community research".
- (9) "Photo-identification Monitoring of the Eastern Taiwan Strait Population of Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphins". This project has just started.

As soon as sufficient additional funding for 2-3 projects is secured a new call for proposals will be launched, possibly by the end of 2012.

The UK commended the work being conducted under the Small Cetaceans fund, noting that the IWC must not overlook the conservation of small cetaceans, and applauded the work being done by Mexico to protect the Vaquita. In addition it noted

its concern over the continued hunting of Dall's porpoise, noted the Scientific Committee's concern over the hunting of Baird's Beaked whales and encouraged the provision of data to assist the efforts of the Scientific Committee in its work.

Both the Netherlands and Italy intend to make a formal announcement next week of a financial contribution to the Small Cetaceans Fund.

The Conservation Committee **congratulates** the Scientific Committee on its work and looks forward to receiving reports on further progress and the final outcomes. The importance of voluntary contributions to continue this work was highlighted and thanks were expressed to all of the Contracting Governments and observer organisations whose funding has allowed the work to progress. Several countries noted the importance of continued contributions to the small cetacean fund in order to continue the very practical, strategic and direct support of small cetacean conservation initiatives, especially as some of the most threatened populations belong to this group.

## **12. OTHER MATTERS**

The UK drew attention to the report of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on strengthening IWC financing due to be discussed by the Finance and Administration Committee later in the week (IWC/64/F&A 4). Financing for projects and research is required for the important work being done across the IWC on issues such as ship-strikes, entanglement, CMPs and marine debris to contribute to the shared IWC goal of healthy whale populations.

Australia raised the issue of cooperation with other organisations noting the Scientific Committee process of agreeing formal IWC observers to attend meetings of other international organisations. Australia requested that the Scientific Committee make reports to this Committee where the work of such organisations is of relevance to it. In addition it suggested that other organisations whose work is relevant to the Committee should be identified and a complementary initiative be instituted through the Conservation Committee. Australia volunteered to do some of this work intersessionally.

Belgium will host a CCAMLR related workshop in September 2012, as well as the Annual meeting of ATCM/CEP in May 2013. Both meetings will be held in Brussels.

At IWC/63 the Commission recognised the Secretariat's on-going work on the Commission's new website. The Secretary introduced the pre-launch version of the new site, the URL of which is <http://demo.iwcoffice.org/>. He noted that text from the old website had been transferred to the new site and updated where possible. He stressed that the pre-launch version is provided in order for delegates to suggest modifications and/or additions to the new website to ensure that it accurately reflects all the work being undertaken through the auspices of the IWC including the many new activities instigated by the Conservation Committee.

James Gray was elected as Vice Chair.

## **13. ADOPTION OF REPORT**

The report was adopted 'by post' on 1 July 2012.

## **Appendix 1**

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**Argentina**

Victor Marzari  
Miguel Iniguez

**Australia**

Pam Eiser  
Nick Gales  
Stephanie Ierino  
Chris Schweitzer  
Victoria Wadley  
Alexia Wellbelove

**Austria**

Andrea Nouak  
Michael Stachowitsch

**Belgium**

Frederic Chemay  
Fabian Ritter

**Chile**

Barbara Galletti

**Costa Rica**

Eugenia Arguedas  
Ricardo Meneses

**Denmark**

Ole Samsing  
Amalie Jessen  
Nette Levermann  
Gitte Hundahl

**Dominican Republic**

Peter Sanchez

**Ecuador**

Gustavo Iturralde  
Jorge Samaniego

**France**

Martine Bigan  
Vincent Ridoux

**Italy**

Plinio Conte  
Caterina Fortuna  
Francesca Granata

**Germany**

Karl-Hermann Kock

**Korea, Republic of**

Du Hae An  
Yong-Rock An

**Mexico**

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho (Chair)  
Yolanda Alaniz

**Netherlands**

Peter Bos

**New Zealand**

Gerard van Bohemen  
Louise Chilvers  
Karena Lyons  
Liz Slooten

**Norway**

Kathrine Ryeng  
Truls Soløy  
Einar Tallaksen  
Lars Walløe  
Hild Ynnesdal

**Panama**

Jose Julio Casas  
Hector Guzman  
Juan Mate  
Anna Nunez  
Lissette Trejor

**Russian Federation**

Valentin Ilyashenko  
Alexey Ottoy

**South Africa**

Herman Oosthuizen  
Ed Couzens

**Spain**

Santiago Lens

**Sweden**

Bo Fernholm

**Switzerland**

Bruno Mainini

**UK**

Nigel Gooding  
Sarah Baulch  
Nicola Clarke  
James Gray  
Jenny Lonsdale  
Beatriz Roel  
Anju Sharda  
Mark Simmonds  
Jolyon Thomson

**USA**

Melissa Andersen  
Charlotte Brower  
Robert Brownell  
Carole Carlson  
Doug DeMaster  
Roger Eckert  
Brian Gruber  
Taryn Kiekow  
Michael Lawrence  
Ira New Breast  
Lisa Phelps  
Alison Reed  
Rollie Schmitten  
Michael Tillman  
DJ Schubert  
Ryan Wulff

**SC Chair**

Debra Palka

**SC Vice-Chair**

Toshihide Kitakado

**IWC Secretariat**

Simon Brockington  
Cherry Allison  
Greg Donovan  
David Mattila



## Appendix 2

### LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Conservation Committee documents	Agenda item
IWC/64/CC	
1 Draft Agenda	
2 List of Documents	
3 County Report on Ship Strikes submitted by the Government of Australia	4.2
4 Australia: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report	9.1
5 United States: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report	9.1
6 Report of the Standing Working Group on Whale Watching (submitted by the United States)	6.2
7 Rev1 A Draft Conservation Management Plan Conservation Management Plan for Southwest Atlantic Southern Right Whales (submitted by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay)	8
8 United Kingdom: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2012	9.1
9 Conservation Management Plan for Eastern South Pacific Southern Right Whale Population ( <i>Eubalaena australis</i> ) (submitted by Chile)	8
10 Contamination Problems of the Gray Whales (submitted by the Russian Federation)	3
11 Cetacean Conservation Measures in the Pacific Islands Region with a focus on Oceania Humpback Whales (submitted by Australia)	8
12 Rev Report of the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (submitted by Australia)	8
13 Overview of the work of the technical adviser assigned to the Secretariat in relation to ship strike mitigation: October-May, 2012 (submitted by the Secretariat)	4.2
14 France: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report	9.1
15 Argentina: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report	9.1
16 Overarching Principles and Best Practice Guidelines for Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) (submitted by USA)	6.2
17 Report of the Regional Workshop on Marine Mammal Watching in the Wider Caribbean Region (submitted by USA)	6.2
18 International Workshop on Maritime Transport and Biodiversity Conservation (submitted by Spain)	4
19 New Zealand: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2012	9.1
20 Mexico: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2012	9.1
21 Chile: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2012	9.1
22 Brazil: Voluntary National Cetacean Conservation Report, 2012	9.1
23 Rev Proposal of the Republic of Panama for the establishment of Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS) and Prevention of Vessel Collision with Whales (Panama)	4
24 Action Plan 2011-2016 (submitted by the USA)	6
IWC/64/WKM&AWI 12 Proposal to address indirect human impacts on marine mammals of the wider Caribbean region (submitted by Dominican Republic, France, Mexico, Panama and the United States)	4
IWC/64/Rep1 Report of the Scientific Committee	
SC/64/O1 Summary Report of the Second International Conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas (ICMMPA 2), Martinique, 7-11 November 2011 Hoyt, E.,	

## **Appendix 3**

### **AGENDA**

1. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS
  - 1.1. Appointment of Chair
  - 1.2. Appointment of Rapporteurs
  - 1.3. Review of documents
2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
3. INVESTIGATION OF INEDIBLE ‘STINKY’ GRAY WHALES
  - 3.1. Report on Progress
  - 3.2. Committee discussions and recommendations
4. SHIP STRIKES
  - 4.1 Report from the Scientific Committee
  - 4.2 Report from the Ship Strikes Working Group
  - 4.3 Committee discussions and recommendations
  - 4.4 Appointment of Chair for the Ship Strikes Working Group
5. SOUTHERN RIGHT WHALE POPULATION OF CHILE-PERU
  - 5.1 Report of the Scientific Committee’s Southern Right Whale Assessment Workshop
  - 5.2 Update on Progress
  - 5.3 Committee discussions and action arising
6. WHALEWATCHING
  - 6.1 Report from the Scientific Committee
  - 6.2 Report from the Conservation Committee’s Standing Working Group on Whalewatching
  - 6.3 Committee discussions and recommendations
7. WHALE SANCTUARIES
  - 7.1 Report from the Scientific Committee
  - 7.2 Committee discussions and recommendations
8. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLANS
  - 8.1 Report from the Scientific Committee
  - 8.2 Report from the Conservation Committee’s Small Working Group
  - 8.3 Committee discussions and recommendations
9. NATIONAL REPORTS ON CETACEAN CONSERVATION
  - 9.1 Introduction of national reports
  - 9.2 Committee discussion and recommendations
10. MARINE DEBRIS
11. PROGRESS UNDER THE VOLUNTARY FUND FOR SMALL CETACEAN CONSERVATION RESEARCH
12. OTHER
13. ADOPTION OF REPORT