

**International Whaling Commission
64th Annual Meeting
CITY OF PANAMA, PANAMA, 2-6 JULY 2012**

**Opening Statement of the Members of the Buenos Aires Group (GBA)
Attending the 64 IWC Meeting (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica,
Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay)**

We would like to express our appreciation to the authorities and the people of Panama for their generous hosting the 64th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

The position of the GBA is well known. We recognize the IWC as the multilateral body responsible for whale management and conservation. The Commission has been criticized by different stakeholders and portrayed as an ineffective organization. There is no doubt that the IWC faces difficult times. However the GBA believes that the IWC has achieved enormous success in the management and regulation of whales populations. It has reduced whale hunting dramatically, allowed for several stocks and species to recover from brutal commercial exploitation and brought almost all species of whales out of danger of extinction.

The conservation agenda is advancing to balance the whaling agenda, and this has made possible to make significant progress during the last six-eight years on important issues such as ship-strikes, whalewatching and conservation management plans among others issues. Therefore the GBA supports initiatives that will strengthen the IWC funding to support conservation related work for the benefit of all its members conservation work without increasing financial contributions of Contracting Governments (e.g. ICGSF).

The GBA ratifies its firm commitment with:

- 1) The conservation of whales and the strengthening of the IWC agenda in favor of healthy whale's populations
- 2) The continued enforcement of the moratorium to commercial whaling, established in 1982;
- 3) The end of the scientific whaling under article VIII of the Convention and whaling "under objection".
- 4) The respect to the integrity of the whale sanctuaries recognized by the IWC and the creation and implementation of new sanctuaries, including the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary submitted by Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and Uruguay;
- 5) The firm opposition to the resuming of international trade in whale products that is being currently permitted by two member countries;
- 6) The strengthening of the consideration of conservation issues under the regular work of the Commission, including environmental issues such as climate change, disentanglement, habitat degradation, ship strike, marine debris, emergent diseases, chemical and acoustic pollution and other threats;

- 7) The strengthening and support of the work of the IWC on responsible whale watching. In this regard, the GBA acknowledges and supports the work carried out by the Scientific and Conservation Committees and urges the IWC to continue call for “invited participants” at the IWC Whale Watching Subcommittee. The GBA considers the implementation of the IWC Whale Watching Five Year Strategic Plan as a positive tool towards the achievement of responsible whale watching;
- 8) The work carried out by the IWC on whale welfare and ethics, supporting in this regard the recommendations from the workshop held in March 2012 in the United Kingdom;
- 9) The creation of effective mechanisms to promote and facilitate the participation of developing countries in the work of the IWC;
- 10) The implementation of technical cooperation mechanisms between IWC Members and other multilateral bodies on issues such as disentanglement, emergent diseases, ship strikes, etc;
- 11) To promote the active and constructive participation of civil society in the IWC, following the experience of other international fora. We consider such experiences as important contributions to the debate in the IWC. Therefore we support the adoption of amendments to the Rules of Procedures;

The GBA reiterates its concern regarding the aboriginal subsistence whaling from Greenland/Denmark and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The GBA is looking for a constructive and positive agenda for the IWC. As the road map towards the creation of a climate of trust and confidence within the organization, we propose to look for common issues to all Member Countries and work step by step to gain positive results in the short to medium terms with a view to maintaining healthy populations of whales and as functional elements of the ecosystem. This is a common goal for all member countries.

Finally, the Buenos Aires Group reiterates its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Panama for hosting the 64th meeting of the IWC, as well as for its generous hospitality. Such acknowledgment is also extended to Commissioner Tomás Guardia and all the civil servants who made possible the successful organization and development of this meeting.