

MEDIA RELEASE

Dr William Hogarth, Chair International Whaling Commission

11 March 2009, Rome

The Intersessional Meeting of the International Whaling Commission concluded in Rome today on a note of cautious optimism.

“These have been helpful discussions. There were clear expressions of view that efforts to arrive at a package of proposals must continue,” the Chair of the Commission, Dr Bill Hogarth said.

“Opinions differ amongst the members as to precisely how to accomplish our goal and a great deal of work remains to be done.”

“As Chair of the IWC, I am heartened at the views that have been expressed over the last few days on our work so far, and the general commitment to continue to further develop a set of proposals that can command broad agreement.”

“We are not there yet, but we’ll keep going, and see what we can come up with to be considered at the Commission’s Annual Meeting to be held in Madeira, 22-26 June.”

“The Intersessional Meeting has agreed to give directions to the Small Working Group to continue its work,” Dr Hogarth said.

The IWC meeting was held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome from 9-11 March, to consider the results of the initial deliberations of the Small Working Group (SWG) on the Future of the IWC that was established at the IWC’s Annual Meeting last year.

The task of the SWG, which is chaired by Ambassador Alvaro de Soto, is to ‘assist the Commission to arrive at a consensus solution to the main issues it faces, to enable it to best fulfill its role with respect to the conservation of whale stocks and the management of whaling’.

The final report of the Small Working Group will be available by 18 May.

Over half of the Commission’s 84 members attended the Rome meeting. In addition, there were observers from 4 intergovernmental organizations.

Civil Society was also well represented at the meeting, with over 30 non-governmental organizations. Delegates of six NGOs addressed the meeting.

At close of business, the meeting received a presentation from Japan on events in the Southern Ocean involving the “Steve Irwin” and Japan’s research vessels. The Commission deplored acts of violence against ships and once again unanimously called for action to be taken by the relevant authorities.