

MEETING OF THE SMALL WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF THE IWC

15-19 September 2008, St Pete Beach, Florida, USA

PRESS RELEASE - 19/09/08

As agreed at its 2008 Annual Meeting in Santiago, Chile, the 82-member International Whaling Commission (IWC) convened a 'Small Working Group (SWG)' meeting in St. Pete Beach, Florida, from 15-18 September 2008. It was chaired by Ambassador Alvaro de Soto. This SWG meeting was the first part of [an agreed process](#) to arrive at a consensus solution to the main issues faced by the IWC to enable it to best fulfill its role with respect to the conservation of whale stocks and the management of whaling.

The process is not secret. Based on [recommendations of three independent experts](#) in international negotiations, it comprises two components: one or more small, non-decision-making meetings held without observers being present to allow the free exploration of ideas; and full meetings of the Commission which are open to observers. This is normal international practice and was agreed by the IWC by consensus. The next SWG meeting is tentatively scheduled for December whilst the open intersessional meeting of the IWC will be held in Spring 2009 (precise dates and venue to be decided). The earliest formal decisions could be taken on the IWC's future will be at the Annual Meeting in Madeira in June 2009, which, as usual, will be open to observers and the media.

"This is an important process for the future of whale conservation and the management of human activities that can affect their status. All IWC members want healthy whale stocks, whatever disagreements may exist on how they should be used. The issues we face are culturally sensitive and technically complex but we must address them if the IWC is to succeed" noted the Chair of the IWC, Dr. Bill Hogarth.