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Summary of the 69th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission: 23-27 September 2024

Once widely abundant across the earth's oceans, some whale populations now teeter on the brink of extinction. For many years, the primary cause of this decline was commercial whaling, which started in the early Middle Ages and intensified during much of the 20th century, when an estimated 2.9 million whales were harvested, with nearly 70,000 whales taken annually in 1960s.

Declining stocks and increased public pressure led to adoption of a moratorium on commercial whaling by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1982, which entered into force in 1986—an action considered critical for the survival of many whale species. Today, whales also face threats from bycatch, entanglement in fishing nets, ship strikes, marine pollution, and climate change, which is shifting the location and availability of food sources.

It is in this context that the 69th meeting of the IWC convened, bringing both new and familiar experiences for seasoned delegates. Some Commissioners had not yet met the new Executive Secretary, Martha Rojas Urrego, who assumed leadership of the IWC Secretariat in 2023, and it was the first round of budget discussions after approval of a balanced- and zero-based budget approach. The meeting had to adjust to an absent Chair, whose arrival was derailed by visa challenges. The meeting was also the first test of one of the IWC's signature achievements—the six-year renewal of aboriginal subsistence whaling quotas. Delegates faced familiar responsibilities as well—considering, yet again, whether to establish a whale sanctuary in the South Atlantic, and decision making on proposed resolutions that often inspired debate framed along the usual pro- and anti-whaling divides.

By the end of the meeting, the whaling moratorium remained in place, and a vote on the proposed sanctuary came close, but did not pass. Yet progress occurred on several fronts. The renewal, without rancor or debate, of the six-year catch/strike limits for aboriginal hunters inspired a response from one representative about increased "trust" between the whaling communities and the IWC. Approval of a 3% increase in the IWC budget and announcements of voluntary contributions during the meeting also reflected commitment by the parties to the IWC's work. And, although the IWC didn't reach agreement on proposed changes to the quorum rules, actions by the Acting Chair on what would constitute quorum at this meeting, based on the existing Rules of Procedure, allowed votes to take place in a respectful, efficient manner. The Commission also agreed by consensus to accept changes to rules on the definition of exceptional circumstances, on encouraging contracting government payments, and on encouraging the use of payment plans.

Of the five proposed resolutions, one on food security and one related to the management and orderly development of the whaling industry, were withdrawn; two others passed by consensus, and one by majority vote. Delegates also heard: reports from the Secretariat, Scientific Committee, and Conservation Committee; updates on whale killing methods and welfare issues; and details on cooperation with other organizations.

Other highlights included the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Environment Programme's Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, and honoring the accomplishments of long-time IWC staff.

Although some interventions were heated, delegates largely approved of the meeting's conduct. A comment by Acting Chair Gales, that "the greater the number of parties who gather, the better

In this Issue

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our decision-making," reflected one of the "soft" outcomes of the meeting: a willingness to engage in respectful dialogue even if common ground on some issues remains elusive.

IWC-69 convened from 23-27 September 2024 in Lima, Peru. More than 350 participants and 68 contracting governments attended the meeting.

A Brief History of the IWC

The 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) provides for "the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry." In 1949, upon its entry into force, the Convention established the IWC, whose main duty is to keep under review and revise as necessary its legally binding Schedule to the Convention, which specifies measures to regulate whaling. Today, the IWC takes action both to conserve whales and regulate whaling. These measures, *inter alia*:

- provide for the complete protection of certain species or stocks;
- designate specified areas as whale sanctuaries;
- set limits on the numbers and size of whales that may be taken;
- prescribe open and closed seasons and areas for whaling; and
- prohibit the capture of suckling calves and female whales accompanied by calves.

The Commission also works to understand and address a wide range of non-whaling threats to cetaceans including entanglement, ship strikes, marine debris, climate change, and other environmental concerns. This work includes:

- coordinating and, in several cases, funding conservation work on many species of cetaceans;
- building an international entanglement response capacity;
- working to prevent ship strikes; and
- establishing Conservation Management Plans for key species and populations.

The Commission has also adopted a Strategic Plan for Whale Watching to facilitate the further development of this activity in a way that is responsible and consistent with international best practice.

Membership in the IWC is open to any country that formally adheres to the ICRW, and currently stands at 88. Each member state is represented by a Commissioner, who is assisted by experts and advisers. Since its inception, the IWC has had three main committees: Scientific, Technical, and Finance and Administration. The Technical Committee is no longer in use, but a Conservation Committee was established and first met in 2004. Thirteen sub-committees have been established to address a variety of issues, including setting catch limits, aboriginal subsistence whaling, and bycatch and other anthropogenic removals.

The IWC met annually until 2012, when the Commission agreed to move from annual to biennial meetings. The Scientific Committee continues to meet annually. This Committee comprises up to 200 of the world's leading whale biologists, many of whom are nominated by parties.

The information and advice of the Scientific Committee form the basis on which the Commission develops the whaling regulations in the ICRW Schedule. Schedule amendments require a three-fourths majority vote, in contrast with resolutions, which require a simple majority. The outcomes adopted by the Commission are implemented through the national legislation of the parties.

Key Turning Points

Moratorium on Commercial Whaling: The IWC decided at its meeting in 1982 to establish a moratorium on commercial whaling of all whale stocks. Japan, Peru, Norway, and the USSR lodged objections to the moratorium, rendering it not binding on them. Japan later withdrew its objection. Iceland did not lodge an objection, but withdrew from the IWC in 1992. It rejoined in 2002, with a retroactive objection to the moratorium, and resumed its whaling programme in 2006. Today, only Norway, Iceland, and Japan are considered whaling nations, with Norway and Iceland referring to their respective objections. Japan undertook scientific whaling, which was allowed under the Convention, but later withdrew from the IWC in 2019. In addition, some aboriginal communities in Denmark (Greenland), the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and the US (Alaska) engage in subsistence whaling.

In addition to the moratorium, two whale sanctuaries have been created in the Indian Ocean (1979) and in the Southern Ocean (1994).

Revised Management Procedure: Between 1994 and 2007, the Scientific Committee concentrated on a comprehensive assessment of whale stocks. This resulted in the development of the Revised Management Procedure (RMP), which would be used in setting catch limits for different whale populations in case the moratorium was to be lifted. The RMP was accepted and endorsed by the IWC in 1994, but has not yet been implemented, pending the negotiation of a Revised Management Scheme (RMS). This RMS would set out a framework for inspection and observation to ensure compliance with the RMP. These negotiations proved challenging and in 2007 the Commission recognized that it had reached an impasse, and the moratorium has remained in place.

IWC-58: At IWC-58 in June 2006, delegates recognized that the issue of advancing the RMS had reached an impasse. A proposal by Brazil and Argentina for a South Atlantic Sanctuary was not put to a vote. Japan's proposals to allow the yearly taking of 150 minke whales by coastal communities and to abolish the Southern Ocean Sanctuary were again defeated. The Commission adopted the St. Kitts and Nevis Declaration proposed by Japan and several other countries, which declared a commitment to "normalizing the functions of the IWC."

Conference for the Normalization of the IWC: A "Conference for the Normalization of the IWC" was held in Tokyo, Japan, in February 2007. The meeting aimed to "put forward specific measures to resume the function of the IWC as a resource management organization." Although Japan had invited all IWC members, only 35 countries attended the meeting, which was not officially sanctioned by the IWC. The meeting resulted in a series of recommendations to the IWC at its 2007 meeting, including a request for secret ballots and Japan's proposal on coastal takes of minke whales. However, differences remained at the sessions held in 2007 and 2008.

IWC-59 and IWC-60: At IWC-59 in 2007, the proposal by Brazil and Argentina for a South Atlantic Sanctuary was again put to a vote, but failed to obtain the required three-fourths majority. At IWC-60 in 2008, delegates established a number of additional sub-committees to address various issues. The meeting also established by consensus a Small Working Group to facilitate further discussions or negotiations on the future of the IWC.

IWC-62: The "Future of the IWC" process resulted in a number of recommendations to IWC-62, which was held in Agadir, Morocco, in 2010. At this meeting, delegates were unable to reach consensus on a number of important issues, including: continuation of the moratorium; special permit whaling; catch limits; sanctuaries; aboriginal subsistence whaling; and trade. Japan indicated that a main stumbling block was the demand that Japan end its Antarctic whaling programme.

IWC-63: At IWC-63 in 2011, delegates agreed on measures to improve the effectiveness of operations within the IWC, and on a new experimental procedure relating to the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in its plenary sessions. It made no changes to the present limits regarding aboriginal subsistence whaling. The meeting reached an impasse on the creation of a South Atlantic Sanctuary.

IWC-64: At IWC-64 in 2012, among other things, delegates endorsed a significant list of recommendations about whale welfare, rejected Japan's proposal to allow coastal takes of minke whales, and approved increased quotas for several aboriginal subsistence hunts, except Greenland's. The proposal for a South Atlantic Sanctuary was once again rejected.

International Court of Justice Ruling: The UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in 2014 on a case Australia brought against Japan in 2010, alleging that Japan's continued pursuit of a large-scale whaling programme under special permit in the Antarctic is a breach of obligations assumed by Japan under the ICRW, as well as its other international obligations for the preservation of marine mammals and the marine environment. The ICJ ruled against Japan, arguing that Japan's scientific objectives do not justify the large numbers taken. The ICJ ordered a temporary halt to the activities around Antarctica. Shortly thereafter, Japan announced that it would resume its scientific whaling programme in the Northwest Pacific, and in 2015, announced it would launch a new scientific programme in the Antarctic.

IWC-65: IWC-65, held in 2014, passed a resolution on special permits, in response to the ICJ ruling, that included instructions to the Scientific Committee and a request on the conditions that must be met and the steps that must be taken before special permits are issued. It also adopted resolutions on, *inter alia*: four-year catch limits for Greenland aboriginal subsistence whaling; enhancing collaboration on the conservation of migratory cetaceans with other relevant intergovernmental organizations; and civil society participation and transparency. Proposals to create a South Atlantic Sanctuary and to permit the coastal take of minke whales by small-type whaling vessels in Japan were not adopted.

IWC-66: IWC-66, held in 2016, passed resolutions on, *inter alia*:

- initiating a comprehensive independent review of IWC's institutional and governance mechanisms;
- establishing a Standing Working Group to consider reports and recommendations of the Scientific Committee regarding special permit programmes;
- establishing a fund to strengthen the capacity of governments with limited means;
- collaborating with the Minamata Convention; and
- urging action to protect the highly endangered vaquita dolphin.

IWC-66 also considered cooperation with other organizations and, for the first time, allowed NGOs to attend some intersessional meetings and speak during meetings. Japan introduced an agenda item on the IWC in the future, proposing intersessional work to explore how to address the interests of all members in an equal manner, despite longstanding and divergent perspectives. A proposal to create a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary failed to pass once again.

Recent Meetings

IWC-67: The 67th meeting of the IWC, held in 2018, passed resolutions on anthropogenic noise; ghost gear entanglement; advancing work on the role of cetaceans in ecosystem functioning; and the Florianópolis Declaration, which, *inter alia,* reaffirmed the importance of maintaining the moratorium on commercial whaling. IWC-67 also addressed, *inter alia*: cetacean status and health; cetacean habitat; unintended anthropogenic impacts; whale killing methods and welfare issues; and Japan's Special Permit programme.

Virtual Special Meeting: The Virtual Special Meeting of the Commission was held on 9-10 September 2021, since the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Commission to delay its in-person biennial meeting. The Special Virtual Meeting addressed only urgent issues that could not be delayed for a year, principally the budget.

IWC-68: The 68th meeting of the IWC, held in 2022, agreed to use a balanced budget and zero-based budget process going forward. A proposed Schedule amendment on the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary was not put to a vote due to lack of quorum. Other focal areas included, *inter alia*: review of Conservation Management Plans; bycatch mitigation; and impacts of climate change, plastic pollution, and ship strikes on whale populations.

IWC-69 Report

On Monday, 23 September, IWC Vice-Chair Nick Gales (Australia), serving as Acting Chair, opened the meeting. Peter Camino Cannock, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peru, said the IWC is a "vital meeting place" for agreeing on multilateral actions for the conservation and sustainable management of cetaceans. He underscored Peru's strong connections to the sea, from prehistoric times to the present day, and drew attention to the destructive effects of climate change and marine biodiversity loss on whale populations.

Martha Rojas Urrego, IWC Executive Secretary, welcomed Commissioners and stressed the Secretariat's readiness to support their work at IWC-69 and beyond.

Acting Chair Gales invited participants to join in a moment of silence to honor IWC Commissioners and participants who had passed away since IWC-68.

Acting Chair Gales ruled that Commission's Financial Regulations F.5(e) and F.5(f) (arrears of contributions affecting parties' rights to attend and vote) would not apply at IWC-69, following precedents set at previous meetings. He said the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WGOE) will be tasked with reviewing whether these rules should apply at future meetings and will report to IWC-70.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, supported by others, expressed concern about the difficulties that IWC Chair Amadou Telivel Diallo (Guinea) and other delegates from developing countries had faced in obtaining visas to attend IWC-69, resulting in a "lack of balance" in the room and "trust issues" with the Commission. Rojas Urrego highlighted the efforts by the Secretariat and host government of Peru to facilitate visas for Commissioners, while stressing that member governments are ultimately responsible for such matters. Acting Chair Gales stressed that future meetings would continue to prioritize the attendance of all parties.

The Commission next considered the agenda. BRAZIL, supported by ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, suggested debate on the proposed resolutions should be made during the week, with decision making on all matters to be held on Thursday. This was agreed and the agenda was adopted (IWC/69/02/01).

On Tuesday, Acting Chair Gales announced that IWC Chair Amadou Telivel Diallo (Guinea), could not attend this meeting due to visa complications that could not be resolved.

Quorum: Acting Chair Gales presented the Report of the WGOE (IWC/69/REP/WGOE/01). He outlined three options to modify the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for the matters of quorum—for beginning a meeting and for decision making. No consensus was reached on any of the proposals and the Commission agreed to continue with the existing rules. Acting Chair Gales ruled that quorum for decision making will be determined at the beginning of each session during IWC-69 and will hold for that session.

ARGENTINA, supported by CHILE, called for the continuation of the WGOE's work so that the Commission may consider two options for review at IWC-70.

The Commission decided to refer the RoP on quorum to the WGOE for further consideration during the next intersessional period with two options to be presented to IWC-70 before the adoption of other decisions.

Credentials: The Secretariat provided updates throughout the meeting on the status of contracting parties' credentials and voting rights. On Thursday, the Secretariat reported that 63 credentials had been received from contracting governments, with 57 having voting rights, and explained that nine countries had achieved voting rights since the beginning of the meeting in accordance with the existing RoPs and the Chair's ruling on Monday.

Executive Secretary's Report on Secretariat Activities

On Monday, IWC Executive Secretary Rojas Urrego presented her report (IWC/69/04/01), which summarizes activities since IWC-68. She highlighted meetings held by the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, scientific reports and documents reviewed and prepared by the Secretariat, collaboration with other organizations, visibility and outreach activities, and other initiatives.

NEW ZEALAND highlighted the IWC's Whale Watching Handbook. Hungary, on behalf of the European Union (EU) states who are IWC members (hereafter Hungary, on behalf of the EU), underscored the importance of neutrality in the role of the Secretariat. GUINEA requested information on procedures for saving stranded whales. PANAMA stressed the importance of strengthening collaboration with other Conventions. The US suggested making the report on Secretariat activities a standing agenda item.

The Commission noted the report, and agreed to make this agenda item permanent.

Scientific Committee

SC Presentation: On Monday, Scientific Committee (SC) Chair Alex Zerbini (Brazil) and SC Vice-Chair Lindsay Porter (UK) presented an overview of the SC's work, noting financial difficulties in supporting regular meetings, describing measures to reduce SC meeting costs, and welcoming contributions from governments. They noted the IWC's implementation of a "zero-based budget approach" and highlighted a 30% reduction to its research budget and a 62% cut to the meeting budget. They cautioned that, if continued, significant budgets cuts will affect the work of the IWC, permanently damaging its credibility.

They presented the SC's Communication Initiative, focused on providing more accessible summaries of the SC's work for the Commission, including a "science hub" outside the meeting room, staffed by SC members. They also highlighted work on population assessments, including a pre-assessment on genetics and abundance estimates to establish population models on how removals affect abundance and conclude by describing what the status of population is. They reported on six strike limit algorithms developed to provide management advice, and its assessment on unusual mortality events on grey whales. The SC agreed that for all aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW), all current strike limits will not harm the stocks.

On the status of whales, they reported on the development of a website with information on the stability of whale populations. They said many human impacts, such as bycatch, underwater noise, and climate change, are considered in multidisciplinary collaboration with other organizations and stakeholder engagement. On habitat and ecosystems, they explored the relationship between stranding incidents and plastic and chemical pollution and disease, and established a stranding initiative, with experts from across the world noting emergency response as the most critical component. On ecosystem modelling, the work focuses on informing the Committee of the relationship with whales and their ecosystems and addressing knowledge gaps. They presented work on conservation management plans (CMPs), and on an external review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary (SOS), which determined that the SOS is meeting its objective and serving as an incentive for cutting-edge polar research on whales and their ecosystems. They presented the development of a Whale Watching Handbook that helps explain potential impacts of the activity. They also presented Resolution 2000-7 on the Status of the State of the Cetacean Environment Report, and Resolution 2022-1, on plastics.

In response to a question from PALAU about references to impacts of hunting of whales, SC Chair Zerbini said current quotas are not harming whale populations and no hunting is carried out by any Commission member state.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA shared their growing concern about the SC "systematically ignoring" the concerns of the Commission, which he said was "drifting" from its critical function of providing information on catch limits and the abundance of stocks.

Acting Chair Gales noted the Commission would discuss information on catches and budget during the agenda items on the presentation of the future work plan from the SC and on budgetary proposals.

COLOMBIA highlighted collaboration by the governments of Colombia, Brazil, and Peru on studies related to river dolphins. The CETACEAN CONSERVATION CENTER noted commercial whaling is unsustainable and urged the IWC to concentrate on the conservation of whale populations.

SC Reports: On Thursday, SC Chair Zerbini, together with Vice-Chair Porter and IWC Head of Management and Conservation Iain Staniland, presented the SC reports for 2023 and 2024 (IWC/69/REP/SC/01 and IWC/69/REP/SC/02).

They highlighted, *inter alia*:

- the SC's communication initiative;
- organization of the SC, with a brief overview of its 16 subgroups;

- work on population assessments, particularly management of the whaling catch database;
- change in working practices of abundance estimates;
- collaborative conservation planning;
- developing CMPs for priority species/stocks;
- the IWC-Pacific Ocean Whale and Ecosystem Research Programme (IWC-POWER);
- projects conducted with voluntary funds; and
- the SC's working methods.

They announced the incoming SC officers: Chair Lindsay Porter (UK) and Aimée Lang (US).

SWITZERLAND, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, the US, ARGENTINA, NEW ZEALAND, PANAMA, BRAZIL, and other contracting governments commended the SC for its work and urged for the SC budget to be strengthened, not weakened. The UK requested an update on the status of North Pacific fin whales, given Japan has resumed hunting this species and the last assessment was in 1975. INDIA said they had completed their first range-wide assessment of river dolphins and reiterated a commitment to science-based conservation. GUINEA requested further details on IWC-POWER. The US celebrated that, for the first time, both the SC Chair and Vice-Chair positions would be held by women. TOGO, SAINT LUCIA, and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC highlighted technological and capacity-related challenges faced by developing countries with regard to whale strandings and other issues.

The SC Chair noted that North Pacific fin whales were not on the current priority list for assessments and said that could change if the Commission desires, but clarified that adding a new priority would mean cutting an existing one, given the limited time, expertise, and budget available for assessments. On IWC-POWER, the SC noted that it collects data on species abundance and on acoustics and stock structure, among other things, and is open to the participation of additional contracting governments.

The INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE (IUCN) praised the SC for maintaining the quality of its work while navigating financial challenges. BIODIVERSITY ACTION NETWORK EAST ASIA expressed concern about the resumed hunting by Japan of fin whales in the North Pacific and the lack of a recent assessment on their status. CENTRO DE CONSERVACION CETACEA underscored the fundamental role living whales play in ecosystem functioning and maintaining healthy fisheries.

Final Outcome: On Thursday, the IWC adopted the reports of the SC and its recommendations.

Conservation Committee

Presentation: On Monday, Conservation Committee (CC) Chair Jack Collier (UK) introduced the CC's report (IWC/69/REP/CC/01) on intersessional work since IWC-68 and the plan for future work. He encouraged contracting governments to contribute voluntary reports to the Conservation Database and highlighted, *inter alia*:

- the recommendation to update and align the new Strategic Plan for 2027-2036 with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement);
- a decadal review of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary that affirmed the Sanctuary's success;
- recommendations for contracting governments to support the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI);
- support for the development of CMPs for identified priority populations, and endorsements of CMP proposals for Lahille's dolphins, Guiana dolphins, and Central American Humpback whales, plus provisional endorsement for the substance of the CMP proposal for Asian River dolphins;
- support for a name change from "Ship Strikes Working Group" to "Vessel Strikes Working Group";
- support for the updated Terms of Reference for the Intersessional Correspondence Groups on marine debris, anthropogenic underwater noise, and climate change;
- support for the Extinction Alert mechanism, noting it should be used "sparingly and strategically"; and
- the need for strengthened contributions to the Voluntary Conservation Fund, now standing at GBP 174,000, which is less than what is needed to fund current and anticipated proposals.

Acting Chair Gales thanked the CC for their work and noted discussions would continue under the biennial budget agenda item.

On Wednesday, delegates had further discussions on the presentation and report. Hungary, on behalf of the EU, highlighted its usefulness in addressing the conservation of cetaceans. The NETHERLANDS announced a voluntary contribution of EUR 20,000. IUCN highlighted the benefits of collaborative efforts with other international agreements, particularly with the CBD and the BBNJ Agreement. INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR ANIMAL WELFARE, with OCEANCARE, pointed towards collaborative efforts with the private sector to reduce collision risks. ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE announced a contribution of GBP 30,000 to the IWC.

On Thursday, in discussions on the biennial budget agenda item, CAMBODIA requested to adjust the language related to the CC report regarding support from their government for the Irrawaddy River dolphin CMP, noting uncertainty about when a letter of support will be released. URUGUAY requested to be moved from paying group 3 to 2, considering their condition as a developing country. Acting Chair Gales suggested they work together with the budgetary committee and report back at ICW-70 with a solution.

Final Outcome: The Commission adopted the report of the CC and its recommendations, noting the support in principle from the Government of Cambodia for the Irrawaddy river dolphin CMP.

Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling

Extension of the ASW Strike/Catch Limits at IWC-69: On Monday, ASW Sub-Committee Chair Bruno Mainini (Switzerland) presented the report of the ASW Sub-Committee (IWC/69/REP/ASW/01), reviewing available information on all subsistence hunts. The effects of the recent eastern North Pacific gray whale Unusual Mortality Event (UME) on the strike limit algorithm were discussed and it was determined that the UME had ceased. The report concurred with the SC's advice that continuation of the same Strike/Catch Limits will not harm the stocks, all ASW countries have complied with the approved timeline, and the information provided represents a status quo continuation of the hunt. The report recommended to the Commission that the conditions of Schedule paragraph 13(a)(6) have been met and the ASW catch/strike limits should be extended for six years.

Mainini said the voices of Indigenous representatives could be improved in future work and recommended the Commission reconsider its use of the term "aboriginal." The US said people

from northern Alaska have struggled to retain the right to hunt and expressed appreciation for the work of the IWC.

The Commission decided by consensus that all the ASW countries have complied with the approved timeline, and the information provided represents a *status quo* continuation of the hunt. The Commission therefore agreed that the conditions of Schedule paragraph 13(a)(6) have been met and the ASW Strike/Catch Limits could be extended for six years.

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES said this decision should not be viewed as a favor, but as a basic human right. DENMARK thanked decision-makers at IWC-69 on behalf of the people of Greenland.

OPES OCEANI FOUNDATION welcomed the decision on quotas and said aboriginal whaling is not a right or privilege the IWC can take away.

Acting Chair Gales recalled that the discussion in 2018 to adopt the Schedule Amendment on ASW at IWC-67 was difficult, but today's decision shows that trust has been established. He said contracting governments should be proud to have reached a decision that has divided the Commission for years, and underscored that the IWC should listen to the voices of affected people first.

On Tuesday, Gales returned to the discussion on use of the term "aboriginal," suggesting it be led by those to whom the term refers. SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES said his country conducts subsistence whaling, and that the term derives from Western standards, is discriminatory and racist, and should be corrected. The US, represented here by the Vice-Chair of the Alaska Whaling Commission, expressed no objections to use of the word "aboriginal" in the context of aboriginal subsistence whaling, saying it is used in important ways to protect their hunts.

Acting Chair Gales proposed that the ASW Sub-Committee facilitate a dialogue among hunters of affected communities and report back to IWC-70.

Final Outcome: The Commission adopted the ASW Sub-Committee's report and its recommendations, including to extend ASW Strike/Catch Limits for six years, and tasked the ASW Sub-Committee with facilitating a discussion among hunters from the relevant ASW countries to consider the term "aboriginal" as it applies to their whaling, and report back to IWC-70 on whether they wish any further action on the use of that term.

Proposal to Amend the Schedule

South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary: On Monday, BRAZIL, also on behalf of Argentina, Ecuador, Gabon, South Africa, and Uruguay, introduced the proposed Schedule amendment (IWC/69/8.1/01) to create a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SAWS), noting this proposal has been on many IWC agendas since its introduction in 1998. He underscored that the SAWS would enhance the biodiversity, conservation, and non-lethal utilization of whale resources in the region while providing a framework for cooperation among South Atlantic countries. He also noted the proposal and its associated CMP had been endorsed by the SC and CC.

Ryan Wulff (US), Chair of the Finance and Administration (F&A) Committee, reported no short-term costs for this proposed amendment, but medium-term costs of GBP 8,000 for the SC to conduct periodic assessments.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, TOGO, SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, SAINT LUCIA, SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS, and NORWAY opposed the proposal, expressing doubts that the SAWS would enhance the status of whale stocks beyond what the moratorium on commercial whaling had already achieved. NORWAY called the SAWS "redundant" given that no commercial whaling is planned for this region, and argued that a Sanctuary would not protect whales from vessel strikes, climate change, and entanglements.

Hungary, for the EU, lauded the proposal as "scientifically robust." Other contracting governments also expressed support, including INDIA, AUSTRALIA, the US, NEW ZEALAND, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, the UK, CHILE, COLOMBIA, SOUTH AFRICA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, PANAMA, MONACO, ECUADOR, COSTA RICA, and ARGENTINA.

AUSTRALIA said the SAWS would facilitate whale conservation and non-lethal scientific research. The US added that the SAWS would advance education, outreach, and international cooperation among range states. NEW ZEALAND commended the "symbolic and practical aspects" of the SAWS, and the UK said it would provide a "haven" for cetaceans who continue to face a multitude of anthropogenic threats. SOUTH AFRICA stressed the "interlinked" nature of whale populations across the Atlantic, and called for countries on both sides of the ocean to work together. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC highlighted ways the SAWS would enable tourism.

HUMPBACK WHALE INSTITUTE detailed the potential social, scientific, and economic benefits of the SAWS and praised it as a framework for cooperation in the South Atlantic basin. WHALE CONSERVATION INSTITUTE, with the support of civil society organizations, stressed the importance of whales as "living resources critical for the welfare of the entire human race," and emphasized that proponents of the resolution include developing countries.

GLOBAL GUARDIAN TRUST and IWMC WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST disagreed with the proposed scope for the protected area, saying it covers too vast an area of ocean.

On Thursday afternoon, BRAZIL, saying the proposal lacked consensus, requested a vote: 40 voted in favor, 14 opposed, and 3 abstained. With less than a three-fourths majority, the proposal did not pass.

BRAZIL thanked contracting governments who supported the proposal, and vowed to continue working to establish a SAWS and to encourage cooperation in science and research and the non-lethal use of cetaceans.

TOGO welcomed the outcome and encouraged contracting governments to pursue conservation measures through marine protected areas (MPAs), stressing the rights of sovereign nations "to make their own decisions to meet their own needs and food preferences." NORWAY reiterated that a sanctuary is not needed for an area that is already part of a moratorium. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA called for more consultation and collaboration in a spirit of compromise. CHINA requested more scientific evidence for how a SAWS could protect whales without impacting fisheries production or the social and economic development of coastal states.

BRAZILIAN HUMPBACK WHALE INSTITUTE pointed out that an "overwhelming majority" of the contracting governments who participated in the vote supported a SAWS, and expressed hope for a different outcome at IWC-70.

Final Outcome: The IWC rejected the proposal to amend the Schedule to establish a SAWS.

Resolutions

Food Security: On Tuesday morning, GHANA presented the resolution on food security proposed by Guinea and co-sponsored by Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Republic

of Congo, Senegal, and Saint Kitts and Nevis (IWC/69/9.1/01). He highlighted the value of the whales for nutrition, food, livelihoods, and cultural identity.

F&A Chair Wulff informed the Commission that there are no costs associated with this resolution.

In the ensuing debate, ARGENTINA and the REPUBLIC OF KOREA stressed the IWC is not the appropriate forum to address this issue. The EU, UK, AUSTRALIA, and the US agreed, and expressed a willingness to participate in drafting a modified text. NORWAY, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, TOGO, and CÔTE D'IVOIRE supported the draft resolution, highlighting that whaling represents a contribution to food security for some people. SAINT LUCIA also supported, noting since the IWC controls the taking of whales, it is the appropriate forum for considering food security issues related to whale meat.

BENIN ENVIRONMENT AND EDUCATION SOCIETY, supported by 20 other conservation organizations, pointed out that West and Central African societies had no tradition of hunting whales for food or any other cultural needs. He cited an open letter, signed by more than a hundred scientists, wildlife experts, and conservation organizations from West and Central Africa, calling for the leaders of West and Central African countries to stop supporting whaling and opposing conservation measures at the IWC, and to support the creation of the SAWS.

Rebutting claims that the proposed resolution was designed to circumvent the moratorium on commercial whaling, IWMC WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST, on behalf of the GLOBAL GUARDIAN TRUST, said the resolution simply reaffirms the guiding document of the IWC, and asks that food security be considered when IWC decisions are made.

WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION, on behalf of 18 conservation NGOs, urged contracting governments "to be mindful of the precedent this resolution would set" in terms of endorsing the commercial killing of whales. She suggested that food security concerns would be better addressed within the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO).

Ghana agreed to form a drafting group. On Thursday morning, Ghana said the draft resolution was not able to achieve consensus and would be resubmitted for consideration at IWC-70.

Final Outcome: The resolution on food security was withdrawn.

Implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks Aimed towards Lifting the Moratorium and Orderly Development of the Whaling Industry: ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA introduced the resolution on a CMP for whale stocks aimed toward lifting the moratorium on whaling, co-sponsored by Saint Lucia (IWC/69/9.2/01). He highlighted that whale stocks are robust and can survive catch and strike limits, noting the 1982 moratorium was meant to be a temporary management measure that would be reviewed within 10 years, and that this review has not been completed.

F&A Chair Wulff reported short-term costs of GBP 97,000 related to the formation of the special task force specified in this draft resolution and longer-term costs that would need further assessment.

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS, SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, and GHANA supported the resolution, citing the robust status of current stocks and the original intent of the moratorium as a temporary management measure.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, with AUSTRALIA, the UK, INDIA, the US, NEW ZEALAND, ARGENTINA, and REPUBLIC OF KOREA opposed, citing, *inter alia*, IWC budgetary constraints, marine biodiversity concerns, the low global demand for whale meat, and the growing threats facing cetaceans globally. Noting that "protracted, exhaustive, and extensive" debates on this issue in past IWC processes had "led nowhere," AUSTRALIA requested that the proponents withdraw the resolution. The UK encouraged all countries to end their whaling programs and engage in the non-lethal use of whales.

OCEANCARE, on behalf of 17 national and international NGOs at IWC-69, called the resumption of commercial whaling "unacceptable," and noted that the contracting governments wishing to revive it are "unwilling" to fund the expensive and multi-year management, monitoring, and control regime that would be necessary for its oversight.

GLOBAL GUARDIAN TRUST and IWMC WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST called the draft resolution a "timely initiative for the future of the IWC" and urged for its adoption.

OPES OCEANI FOUNDATION voiced concern with the moral position taken by some contracting governments that commercial whaling is "wrong in principle."

Antigua and Barbuda agreed to form a drafting group to work on the draft resolution.

On Thursday morning, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA said it was not possible to reach consensus on the revised draft resolution (IWC/69/9.2/01/Rev1) and that it would be resubmitted for consideration at IWC-70. PALAU said they would join as a co-sponsor.

Final Outcome: The proposed resolution on a CMP for the management and development of the whaling industry was withdrawn.

Cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: On Tuesday, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, introduced the draft resolution (IWC/69/9.3/01), stressing the critical ecological importance of the Southern Ocean as the single largest feeding area for southern hemisphere whales.

F&A Chair Wulff informed the Commission that there were short-term costs related to travel arrangements associated with the resolution.

CHILE, INDIA, and SOUTH AFRICA supported the draft resolution with the US, AUSTRALIA, the UK, NEW ZEALAND, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, BRAZIL, and ARGENTINA proposing minor suggestions.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, invited interested contracting parties to a drafting group.

On Wednesday, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, reported that the draft resolution had been improved by the work of the drafting group.

On Thursday morning, Belgium, representing the EU, said the draft text had been agreed and was ready for consideration by the Commission. In the afternoon, it was adopted by consensus.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IWC/69/9.3/01/Rev1), the IWC, *inter alia*:

- welcomes the endorsement by the Scientific Committee of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) of a CCAMLR observer to the IWC SC;
- encourages the establishment of a formal agreement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, between the IWC and CCAMLR to facilitate data sharing, the exchange of information on the effects of fisheries and global environmental change in the

Antarctic region relevant to whale populations, and the provision of expert advice relating to cetaceans by the IWC to inform management decisions;
- invites contracting governments, other states, and relevant organizations active in the area to enhance their scientific and monitoring activities and contribute to data gathering and exchange for the conservation and management of cetaceans in the Southern Ocean;
- encourages parties to provide direct and indirect support to implement the objectives of the IWC-Southern Ocean Research Partnership and SC research on related topics;
- fully supports the establishment, based on the best available science, of a representative system of MPAs within the CCAMLR Convention area as these MPAs could further support the conservation-related objectives of the Southern Ocean Sanctuary;
- calls on all Antarctic krill-fishing nations to take the measures necessary to avoid bycatch of cetaceans; and
- requests the IWC Secretariat to engage with International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators with a view of further distributing the Whale Watching Handbook among tourist vessels and operators and to seek further collaboration in order to avoid collisions, changes in behavior, and other potential impacts on cetaceans in the Southern Ocean.

Synergies between the IWC, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the BBNJ Agreement: On Tuesday, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, introduced the draft resolution (IWC/69/9.4/01), noting it is both "timely and crucial" given the adoption of the GBF and the importance of aligning the IWC with the CBD, BBNJ, and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and international organizations and processes.

F&A Chair Wulff said that there were short-term costs related to travel associated with this resolution.

COSTA RICA, INDIA, the US, COLOMBIA, and TOGO supported the draft resolution highlighting their support for the CBD process and the BBNJ agreement.

ARGENTINA and BRAZIL suggested changing the title to refer to the CBD instead of the GBF and, with DOMINICAN REPUBLIC and PANAMA, offered to co-sponsor the resolution.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, offered to prepare a revised version with the suggestions received.

On Thursday morning, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, said that the draft text had been agreed and was ready for consideration by the Commission. ICELAND said they support the draft, but the added text dilutes the essence of original draft. On Thursday afternoon, IWC-69 adopted the resolution by consensus.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IWC/69/9.4/01/Rev2), the IWC, *inter alia*:
- calls for further strengthening the synergies between the IWC and other MEAs and international organizations, particularly in the areas of capacity building, scientific research, monitoring, reporting, communication, and mobilizing financing;
- requests the IWC Secretariat to collaborate with the CBD Secretariat and the interim and future BBNJ Secretariats to strengthen cooperation;
- encourages contracting governments that are also parties to the CBD to integrate IWC cetacean conservation and management objectives and priorities into their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs);
- requests the IWC Secretariat to closely collaborate with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Secretariat and GEF-accredited entities to explore opportunities to gain access to GEF funding for GEF- eligible projects relevant to the IWC's operations concerning the goals and targets of the GBF, such as species-based and region-based Conservation Management Plans; and
- encourages contracting governments to assist the IWC Secretariat in these tasks by sharing expertise and experiences.

International Legal Obligations in Commercial Whaling Activities: On Tuesday, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, introduced a draft resolution co-sponsored by Panama on international legal obligations in commercial whaling activities (IWC/69/9.5/01), highlighting the "unacceptable" recent expansion of commercial whaling activity by non-contracting governments without prior notification to the IWC.

F&A Chair Wulff said that there were no apparent costs associated with this resolution.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA questioned the assertion that the IWC is only international body with the legal rights to manage and regulate whaling.

The UK, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, the US, INDIA, and SOUTH AFRICA supported the draft resolution, with MONACO, ARGENTINA, and PANAMA offering to co-sponsor. JAPAN, as a non-member state, stressed that all information regarding the scientific basis of Japan's whaling activity is publicly available, calling attention to a 1994 IWC decision noting that commercial whaling is not unsustainable. They pointed towards language in the draft resolution that calls for obligations for non-member countries.

The ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY highlighted commercial whaling activities by Japan, Iceland, and Norway despite a moratorium being in place, calling these developments "alarming."

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, said that they would lead a drafting group.

On Thursday, Hungary, for the EU, said that draft text has been agreed and was ready for consideration by the Commission. DENMARK said they supported the draft but noted the IWC is not the only appropriate international organization for the sustainable management of cetaceans, highlighting the role of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO). The UK announced they would join as co-sponsor.

NORWAY, PALAU, and ICELAND stated they would not support the resolution. COLOMBIA and PERU requested to revert to original version of the text, because they are not part of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

On Thursday afternoon, Hungary, on behalf of the EU, requested a vote. Delegates adopted the resolution, with 37 in favor, 12 opposed, and 8 abstentions.

PERU and COLOMBIA clarified that while they supported the resolution in spirit, they had abstained from the vote due to the reference to UNCLOS, to which they are not party.

Final Outcome: In the resolution (IWC/69/9.5/01/Rev1), the IWC, *inter alia*:
- reminds all ICRW contracting and non-contracting governments of their applicable legal obligations under UNCLOS to cooperate with the IWC on the conservation, management and study of cetaceans;

- strongly encourages all ICRW contracting and non-contracting governments to report all activities regarding commercial whaling including by submitting their whaling catch limit calculations for review by the IWC SC at least every six years, and always prior to targeting different species, populations, or areas;
- acknowledges that the moratorium on commercial whaling continues to be necessary to enable whale populations to fully recover, and to support the proper functioning of marine ecosystems; and
- supports the continuation of the moratorium, not least as a precautionary response to the growing threats to cetaceans from direct and indirect human activities.

Finance and Administration

Report of the Finance Committee: On Tuesday, F&A Chair Wulff presented the report of the Committee and its Working Groups (IWC/69/Rep/FA/01). The report includes twelve recommendations for approval by the Commission, including to, *inter alia*, create a new Intersessional Correspondence Group for Fundraising and a Science Liaison Group.

Citing concerns that the IWC work programme might be get skewed by groups who fund specialized aspects of the Commission's work, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA requested that voluntary contributions go toward general IWC funds instead of specific projects. BRAZIL requested that increases to NGO fees take into account differences between NGOs from developing versus developed countries.

On Wednesday morning, Acting Chair Gales presented a correction to the recommendation on creating a new Intersessional Correspondence Group for Fundraising to include reference to its terms of reference in document FA/69/4.3/01.

On Thursday, AUSTRALIA reported that the Science Liaison Group will be comprised of Australia, Portugal, Norway, Iceland, Brazil, the US, and South Africa. They noted their hope that countries from West Africa and Asia join the group.

The Commission adopted the report of the F&A and its recommendations, including suggested changes to: request the Science Liaison Group consider ways in which the priorities of the Commission can be absorbed by the Research Fund; and request the BSC to develop a recommendation concerning the management of voluntary funds.

Final Outcome: The Commission:

- notes the progress of the Voluntary Assistance Fund to date and thanks donors for their ongoing support;
- authorizes the Chair and Vice-Chair to approve any potential new offers on the sale of the Red House should they fall below the GBP 1.25 million threshold set at IWC-68, are around market value and are no lower than the net book value of the Red House;
- approves the creation of a new Intersessional Correspondence Group for Fundraising with the Terms of Reference included in Document FA/69/4.3/01 and invites interested contracting governments to join the Group;
- requests the BSC to develop a recommendation for the management of voluntary funds, which includes, at least, the costs of the Secretariat and administration of the funds;
- approves the increase in line with inflation in the NGO, observer and media fees for the next biennium;
- notes the vacant seats for the BSC membership and requests volunteers to make themselves known to the Chair of the Committee;
- approves the closing of 37 Finance and Administration recommendations on the Database of Recommendations;
- adopts the audited accounts for 2022 and 2023, noting both years received an unqualified audit opinion;
- recommends intersessional work be undertaken by the BSC with regards to the Auditor's recommendation to review Financial Regulation F.5(a);
- approves the signing of two Memoranda of Understanding with the Permanent Secretariat of the Agreement for the Creation of a Sanctuary for Marine Mammals in the Mediterranean and the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, and one Letter of Intent with the UN Environment Programme;
- notes the expected small deficit of the 2024 financial forecast outturn;
- agrees to create a Science Liaison Group, with the Terms of Reference included in IWC/69/10.1/07/Rev1; and
- thanks the UK Government for their support and the contribution towards the rent and service costs of the new IWC Headquarters, and thanks the Government of Germany for their contributions to the running costs of IWC-69.

Biennial Budget: BSC Chair Margie Eddington (Australia) presented the budget proposal contained in document IWC/69/10.2/01. She highlighted that the fees of contracting parties have not kept up with inflation over the last decade, leaving a gap of almost GBP 2 million. She noted this proposal was built with the aim to keeping fees as low as possible while maintaining funding for critical matters, accounting for an inflation rate of about 2%. She said the critical need was extra statistics capacity in the Secretariat and a new database to modernize data storage. She also noted that the Secretariat travel budget is insufficient to attend meetings of other international organizations. She presented a proposal for an increase in budget of 5% in 2025 and in 2026.

In the ensuing discussion, Acting Chair Gales reminded the practice of the IWC is to approve the budget by consensus. NEW ZEALAND and the UK supported the proposed 5% increase. NORWAY, the US, FRANCE, and GERMANY said they could only support a smaller increase in line with inflation. BENIN and BRAZIL said they could not support any increase in the budget, with TOGO proposing to instead support member countries in arrears.

Gales noted support for the approach of the sub-committee, and some agreement on an increase with zero nominal growth, to keep up with inflation. He asked the sub-committee to look for further savings and come back with a proposal increment of about 3%.

On Wednesday afternoon, BSC Chair Eddington presented a revised budget proposal (IWC/69/10.2/01/Rev1) with 3% increases to keep pace with inflation in 2025 and 2026. She noted this requires cutting costs of GBP 109,000 across the biennium, which could be achieved, *inter alia*, by removing additional statistics capability, delaying planned upgrades to digital data storage and retention systems, reducing the overtime budget, and removing additional Secretariat travel. She summarized recommendations from the BSC for the Commission to conduct a strategic review of the current Secretariat workforce to evaluate whether it is sufficient for Commission requirements, and to ensure that the Terms of Reference for the Intersessional Correspondence Group for

Fundraising includes an assessment of the Secretariat travel budget, considering the opportunities such travel presents for building partnerships and fundraising.

The UK supported the proposed budget at a 3% increase, noting it was vital to keep pace with inflation. BENIN and TOGO supported the proposed budget, but stressed that future increases would be more difficult to bear, and called for better mechanisms to help contracting governments clear arrears. ARGENTINA, supported by BRAZIL, COSTA RICA, SPAIN, and PORTUGAL, expressed alarm over the trend of reducing the budget for the SC when it is "the backbone of the Commission." Executive Secretary Rojas Urrego noted the Secretariat was stretched beyond capacity in many areas. The SC Chair asked contracting governments to provide funding to bring "Invited Participants" to SC meetings as a way of easing some of the burden in the SC budget.

ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE, on behalf of several other NGOs, expressed disappointment that the 5% increase originally proposed for the budget wasn't approved. He urged all contracting governments to make "separate and meaningful contributions" to support the Secretariat and the SC, and announced that the Animal Welfare Institute would be contributing GBP 10,000 to IWC core funds, while encouraging others to match.

The Commission agreed to the proposed budget for 2025/2026 with its required increases in financial contributions from contracting governments of 3% in 2025 and a further 3% in 2026, and agreed in principle to the provisional budget for 2027/2028, with increases of 5% in 2027 and 5% in 2028, with the understanding that the latter will be reviewed and adjusted before being presented to the Commission for agreement at IWC-70. They further agreed, *inter alia*, to draw on General Fund reserves to cover the income gap if the Red House doesn't sell before 2025, and to fund two one-off items: a review to ensure the Commission is compliant with General Data Protection Regulation regulations, and the gap in the hosting costs of IWC-69, noting with gratitude that the latter has already been covered by a donation from Germany.

***Final Outcome*:** The Commission:

- notes the proposed budget has been developed following the principles in the Budgetary Reform Strategy agreed at IWC-68;
- agrees to the proposed budget for 2025/2026, which requires increases in financial contributions from contracting governments of 3% in 2025 and a further 3% in 2026 (IWC/69/10.2/01.Rev1 Annex 1), and notes this includes new critical priority items in Annex 2;
- notes the remaining priority needs and exceptional items that are not included in the core budget proposal in Annex 3;
- agrees in principle to the provisional budget of 2027/2028, which requires increases of 5% in 2027 and 5% in 2028 in Annex 4, and which will be reviewed and adjusted before being presented to the Commission for agreement at IWC-70;
- notes the ongoing uncertainties with the sale of the Red House and agrees that the General Fund reserves should be drawn on to cover the income gap if the Red House doesn't sell before 2025;
- agrees that the General Fund reserves should be drawn on to fund two one-off items: ensuring the Commission is compliant with General Data Protection Regulation regulations and funding the gap in the hosting costs of IWC-69, noting the latter has already been covered by the Government of Germany; and
- agrees that the BSC work intersessionally and return to IWC-70 with recommendations to address these matters.

Report of the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness: On Wednesday morning, Lisa Phelps (US), WGOE Co-Chair, presented the report (IWC/69/REP/WGOE/01), summarizing discussions over the intersessional period. She presented three recommendations on changes to the RoP, as detailed in the report's Annex I, including on: criteria for what constitutes exceptional circumstances; aligning the suspension of voting rights with the biennial meeting schedule; and encouraging payment plans to restore contracting governments' voting rights.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, supported the precedent set at IWC-68 for reinstating voting rights in exceptional circumstances and, on the matter of payment plans, suggested an upfront "good faith" payment of 50%. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA said 50% was too much for developing countries, and voting rights should not be linked to financial contributions, as this "suppresses the rights of developing countries to participate in negotiations."

Co-Chair Phelps suggested undertaking a comprehensive review of the entirety of the RoP.

The Commission agreed to adopt changes contained in the WGOE Report and agreed to task the WGOE with further intersessional work to be reported back at IWC-70 on: considering changing the currency of membership fees from GBP to USD; regarding the period of contribution for arrears after which voting rights can be suspended, considering practices in other intergovernmental bodies; and undertaking a comprehensive review.

***Final Outcome*:** The Commission:

- agrees by consensus to accept the WGOE's recommended change to Rule of Procedure E.2 on exceptional circumstances;
- agrees by consensus to accept the WGOE's recommended change to Rule of Procedure E.2 and Financial Regulation F.2 to encourage contracting government payments;
- agrees by consensus to accept the WGOE's recommended change to Financial Regulations F to encourage the use of payment plans;
- requests the WGOE to consider the current situation of locking the exchange rate to GBP and consider an alternative, including, but not limited to, the USD, and report back to IWC70;
- requests the WGOE to consider the adopted changes to Rule of Procedure E.2 and Financial Regulation F.2 and report to IWC70 on how the two-year period fits within the equivalent norms at similar bodies to the IWC;
- requests the WGOE to consider the Acting Chair's ruling on Rule of Procedure F.5(e) and bring back a recommendation to IWC-70; and
- requests the WGOE to conduct a comprehensive review of the Rules of Procedure for clarity and inconsistencies.

Rules of Procedure: The F&A Chair presented the proposal (IWC/69/10.4/01) for changing the RoP pertaining to election of the Bureau of the SC to allow for the inclusion of a Vice-Chair elect. SC Chair Zerbini welcomed the proposed changes, saying they would make the election of officers more straightforward. SAINT LUCIA and BRAZIL also supported. GHANA proposed to include a mechanism to replace elected members in case there are performance issues.

Final Outcome: The Commission agrees by consensus to adopt the proposed changes to SC Rule C.4.

Plastics Resolution: On Tuesday, SC Vice-Chair Lindsay Porter (UK) introduced IWC/69/10.1/08 outlining the costs for potential work related to IWC-68 Resolution 2022-1 on marine plastic

pollution, and invited the Commission to consider three options for the SC to fulfill all, or aspects of, the scientific components of this resolution. She noted it might be possible to support this work through fundraising or voluntary contributions.

On Thursday, Belgium, on behalf of the EU, presented the report on next steps for a follow up to Resolution 2022-1 (IWC/69/10.1/09) for the Commission to endorse. F&A Chair Wulff reported that GBP 15,000 is the implicated cost of this resolution, which articulates two goals for the next intersessional period: to identify and review the most recent literature on the impact of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans, and to lay the groundwork for the global risk assessment for the Commission's consideration.

The US stressed that marine debris, as a threat to cetaceans, needs evaluation, and supported the document.

The SC Vice-Chair explained how they would conduct the work associated with this report during the biennial, and the Commission instructed the SC to undertake this process.

Final Outcome: The Commission endorsed the next steps identified for carrying out work on Resolution 2022-1 towards a global risk assessment on the impacts of marine plastic pollution on cetaceans and requested the SC undertake this work in the next biennium, drawing on the SC's Research Fund to the value of GBP 15,000 from the lowest prioritized projects.

Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues

On Wednesday morning, via video stream, the Commission thanked IWC technical advisor David Matilla, in advance of his retirement, for his "extraordinary contributions" as long-term coordinator of the IWC Expert Advisory Panel on Entanglement Response and the Global Whale Entanglement Response Network. He was lauded for his capacity building efforts, noting the model he developed for entanglement responses has been put into practice across the globe and adapted by other IWC work programmes on bycatch, stranding, and vessel strikes.

Jan Henderson (New Zealand), Chair of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues (WKMWI), introduced the report (IWC/69/REP/WKMWI/01) and summarized its recommendations.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, stressed that transparent data is key to improving the humaneness of whale kills. The UK highlighted: the "Welfare Assessment Tool for Wild Cetaceans"; the recent publication by Australia of new "National Guidelines for Euthanasia of Stranded Large Whales"; and "significant data gaps" on whale kills that undermine the IWC's ability to monitor, assess, and improve killing methods. ARGENTINA and PANAMA highlighted their new whale stranding rescue initiatives, established with the guidance of the IWC. MONACO urged for commercial whaling operations to submit killing data to the IWC and comply with the highest standards of animal welfare. BRAZIL suggested that video cameras and sensors should be installed on commercial whaling vessels to enable e-monitoring. ICELAND said they had undertaken extensive work on whale killing methods and welfare in the past two years and would update the IWC on this work "as early as possible."

IUCN commended the "invaluable work" of the working group to establish ethical standards for subsistence whaling, stranding events, and entanglements. NOAH, on behalf of 19 NGOs, stressed that reporting gaps continue to hinder progress on ensuring that killing methods minimize suffering, pointing to Norway's latest report, which contains time-to-death statistics over a decade old. They called for Norway to host international inspectors on its vessels and urged them, as well as Japan, to report welfare data to the IWC, noting that Japan's recent resumption of fin whale hunting presents significant operational challenges due to the targeting of a very large and fast species. She stressed that Japan, even though it is no longer an IWC contracting government, nevertheless has a duty to cooperate with IWC, and suggested that reporting welfare data should be mandatory.

Final Outcome: The Commission adopted the report and its recommendations.

Other Management Issues

Infractions Sub-Committee: Guro Gjelsvik (Norway), Infractions Sub-Committee Chair, presented the report contained in IWC/69/REP/INF/01. She said that the report contains a summary of: catches received by the Commission for 2022-23; infraction reports received by the Commission for 2022-23; information on the surveillance of whaling operations in 2022-23; and summaries of information provided as required or requested under Section VI of the Schedule and of national legislation supplied to the Commission.

***Final Outcome*:** The Commission adopted the report.

Election of Officers: On Wednesday, the IWC elected Nick Gales (Australia) as IWC Chair and Urbain Brito (Benin) as IWC Vice-Chair.

Bureau Membership: On Thursday, delegates elected Brazil, Togo, and Antigua and Barbuda to the Bureau to replace outgoing members Argentina, Ghana, and Saint Lucia, respectively. Belgium confirmed they would continue on the Bureau.

Future Meetings: On Wednesday, Australia offered and was selected as the host for IWC-70, to be held in a to-be-determined city, in September/October 2026.

Cooperation with Other Organizations

Executive Secretary Rojas Urrego presented the report (IWC/69/15/01), noting the Commission has adopted several recommendations to improve collaboration with other organizations. She highlighted that this engagement includes attendance at several meetings and substantial collaboration with organizations of the Indian Ocean, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Hungary, on behalf of the EU, and the UK welcomed the collaboration between IWC and relevant organizations. In response to a question from TOGO about collaboration with the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Secretariat clarified that collaboration with CITES relates to shared work with specific species, considering the mandate of each organization is different. COLOMBIA highlighted the upcoming sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the CBD in Cali, Colombia. COSTA RICA underscored the importance of collaborating with the CBD, especially with indicators used in monitoring programmes. NEW ZEALAND highlighted collaborative work with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). PRO WILDLIFE pointed towards the growing exports from Norway and Iceland to Japan of whale meat, noting irregularities in the data reported by those countries.

The Commission took note of the report.

Closing Plenary

Other Matters: On Friday morning, Gales informed delegates about a request to reinstate the observer status of Sea Shepherd to the IWC. He reported that the Bureau and private Commissioners' recommendation was to deny the application, concluding the

organization "would not contribute constructively to the business of the Commission," and the organization could reapply at a future IWC meeting. The recommendation was approved by consensus. Gales noted the "enormous contribution" from civil society organizations to the IWC.

NEW ZEALAND, with Morocco, suggested creating a template for the letter of credentials. BENIN said he had experienced actions of influence and intimidation after the previous day's vote. Gales said such behavior should be condemned and the Commission agreed.

ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY highlighted the work of the IWC on small cetaceans and vulnerable species.

WHALEMAN FOUNDATION invited participants to an event in support of anti-whaling activist Paul Watson, who is being held in a Danish prison. TOGO urged for improved measures to facilitate access to visas for IWC-70 participants. ALASKA ESKIMO WHALING COMMISSION thanked the IWC for the continued approval for bowhead whale hunts. PANAMA called for funding to strengthen the Secretariat.

A warm recognition was given to retiring IWC senior editorial assistant Stella Duff, as a "source and encyclopedia of IWC knowledge" after 44 years with IWC, including 26 IWC meetings.

Adoption of Committee Reports: The IWC adopted the summary reports (IWC/69/20/01, IWC/69/20/02, IWC/69/20/03, IWC/69/20/04, and IWC/69/20/05).

Closing Statements: Acting Chair Gales expressed thanks to: the government of Peru, IWC Chair Amadou Diallo for his preparatory work, Executive Secretary Rojas Urrego, the Secretariat, all contracting parties, and support staff. Rojas Urrego lauded the work of the Secretariat staff.

Numerous delegates expressed support and appreciation for: Peru as the IWC-69 host; the Executive Secretary, the IWC Secretariat, and NGO presence; Gales' facilitation of constructive dialogue; and Australia's willingness to host IWC-70. Delegates also extended congratulations to incoming Vice-Chair Urbain Brito.

Host country PERU said the meeting led to better dialogue for the participants. AUSTRALIA highlighted the consensus decision on ASW. SOUTH AFRICA suggested future IWC meetings include a "free day" to allow delegates to more fully appreciate the host country's culture.

Comments by NGOs stressed the importance of ensuring the fiscal health of the IWC, and appreciation for attention paid to the wishes of developing countries.

Gales gaveled the meeting to a close on Friday, 27 September, at 10:47 am.

A Brief Analysis of IWC-69

When a minor earthquake shook the 69th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in Lima, Peru, delegates glanced up briefly at the swinging chandeliers then got back to work. They were accustomed to tremors, after all, in a Commission tectonically divided on its very purpose.

Originally founded in 1946 to oversee the whaling industry in response to rapidly declining whale stocks, the IWC established a global moratorium on commercial whaling that took effect in 1986. Since then, only three nations have engaged in these operations, and the whaling industry as a whole shows no signs of a wider revival, given the lack of demand for whale meat and whale products. Should the IWC therefore dissolve, as a former IWC Chair claimed in a commentary recently published in high-profile journal, suggesting the organization is a "zombie" institution that has outlived its usefulness? Or is the IWC supposed to evolve and adapt to protect cetaceans not only from old threats, but new and emerging ones, given bycatch, entanglements, vessel strikes, climate change, underwater noise, and marine pollution represent the "harpoons" of the present day?

Existential fault lines remain in the Commission, but IWC-69 nevertheless achieved some groundbreaking advances, not least in the civil way that deliberations in this historically-fraught process took place. This brief analysis reviews the key procedural and substantive outcomes from a meeting that many long-term delegates called a "turning point" for the IWC.

The Shifting Ground of Quorum at the IWC

As IWC-69 convened in cloud-draped Lima for its opening session, the seat of the meeting's Chair was conspicuously empty. Unresolvable travel challenges regrettably prevented Amadou Telivel Diallo of Guinea from becoming the first French-speaking West African to lead an IWC biennial meeting. Delegates from a number of developing countries faced barriers in obtaining the necessary visas and transit visas to travel to Lima. Some were forced to fly across continents simply to reach the nearest Peruvian embassy. These challenges resulted in missed flights and unissued visas that led, in the views of some contracting governments, to "a lack of balance in the room."

As a result, on her first tour of duty at an IWC conference, Executive Secretary Martha Rojas Urrego faced pointed questions as to whether the Secretariat had provided adequate support for travel arrangements. She calmly handled the hot seat as she explained the timing of meetings with the Peruvian government about visa matters, and the timing of visa information sent to Commissioners, both of which happened well in advance of the meeting. While noting member governments are ultimately responsible for arranging their own travel to IWC meetings, she nevertheless pledged that the Secretariat would do even more to ensure equitable attendance at the next Commission meeting. As for the lost opportunity to have a French-speaking West African chair an IWC meeting, the Commission agreed to elect Urbain Brito from Benin the next Vice-Chair.

The absence of Chair Diallo meant Vice-Chair Nick Gales of Australia had to assume the Chair's responsibilities at the last minute, although there was nothing "last minute" about Gales' performance as Acting Chair. Delegates commented that his manner, tone, and time management skills—strictly limiting interventions to three minutes, for instance—proved critical as delegates addressed controversial matters, starting with the definition of "quorum." At IWC-68, the ambiguity of this term in the Rules of Procedure derailed decision-making when a number of parties exited the room to prevent a vote. The Working Group on Operational Effectiveness was tasked intersessionally with developing options to clarify the meaning of quorum and presenting them to IWC-69 as the first order of business. In Lima, however, the Commission couldn't agree to any of those options, meaning the existing Rules of Procedure remained in place.

To prevent another walk-out, Acting Chair Gales decided to stack all decisions into a single session, and ruled that quorum at IWC-69 would be established by the number of credentialed parties present at the start of a session and would hold until the end of that session. This meant if a credentialed representative walked out on

a given decision, it wouldn't disrupt quorum. It also meant that an insufficient number of parties at the beginning of a session could result in no decision-making whatsoever. But Gales' all-or-nothing gamble paid off: there was a packed room for the decision-making session.

Remarkably Few Aftershocks from the IWC Decisions

High on the list of accomplishments at IWC-69 were changes to the Rules of Procedure that will help developing countries regain voting rights, ensuring their ongoing participation in the Commission's decision-making processes. Acting Chair Gales suggested, and the Commission agreed, that proof of having sent payment for arrears would be sufficient to reinstate voting rights, and, additionally, parties who couldn't pay two years of arrears in full at this time could regain their voting rights by committing to a payment plan. Later, the Commission formalized this flexibility by amending the Rules of Procedure to define exceptional circumstances and establish payment plans, with both changes facilitating the reinstatement of voting rights.

The first agenda item to go to a vote was Brazil's perennial proposal to establish a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. Once again, the proposal failed to get a three-fourths majority—this time by a single vote. Brazil vowed to resubmit its proposal at IWC-70. Two other controversial resolutions—on food security and on re-opening commercial whaling—prompted some countries to take to the floor to recall that the global moratorium on whaling was not intended to be permanent. When it became clear that common ground was hard to find on food security and ending the moratorium, the proponents of these resolutions withdrew them in order to consult over the intersessional period and bring revised draft resolutions back to IWC-70. "We've shown that on matters that have and continue to divide us," the Acting Chair noted, "we can prosecute our argument with respect, and accept with grace the outcomes of the decision-making process."

Slowly, Steadily Building Mountains of Trust—and of Budgets?

Another previously-challenging IWC agenda item that went smoothly concerned aboriginal subsistence whaling (ASW). Indeed, many delegates hailed the automatic rollover of hunting quotas for ASW communities as "the single greatest achievement of IWC-69." It was the first real-world test of a new multi-year ASW Catch/Strike Limit process that was adopted in 2018 with the goal of providing more certainty about ongoing access to whales for aboriginal hunting communities. Instead of limits requiring a vote at an IWC meeting every two years, as had been the case, the new rules mean the previous limits are automatically rolled over for six years—if there is no increase in the number of whales needed for the hunt, and no change in the status of the harvested populations.

The effectiveness of this new approach was borne out at ICW-69 where the rollover of strike limits was accomplished "without vote or rancor," as the Acting Chair put it. Many representatives from aboriginal communities—although some of those communities disputed use of the term "aboriginal"—took the floor to express gratitude for the continuation of their hunts and the cultural respect this showed, testifying that this rollover helped re-establish trust between ASW communities and the IWC. As the Vice-Chair of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission noted, "We have struggled to retain and strengthen our rights to hunt bowhead whales over the years. This is a huge milestone for our people. It takes away the stress and increases our faith in this organization." Another representative from the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission said he and other community members "had traveled 7,000 miles to make sure they could continue to hunt bowhead whales for the next six years—probably the most studied whale on Earth, because of your direction and requirements."

This remark underscores how critical the work of the IWC's Scientific Committee (SC) is to the effective conservation and management of whales, not just in the case of ASW population assessments, but in every aspect of the Commission. The SC comprises up to 200 of the world's leading whale biologists, many of whom volunteer their time. During IWC-69, the SC was variously lauded by delegates as "the jewel of the Commission," "the most important research body studying whales worldwide," and "the very heart of everything we do as the IWC."

Meanwhile the Conservation Committee (CC) translates the advice of the SC into a management context, leading directly to real-world outcomes—where nets are set and where ships travel. Both committees rely on the dedication of experts such as David Matilla, a retiring IWC Technical Advisor celebrated at IWC-69 for spearheading the IWC Entanglement Response Network, which trained over 1,850 people in 42 countries, saved countless whales from deadly situations, and served as a blueprint for other IWC capacity-building programmes.

And when these committees work together, such as in the joint creation of a new "Extinction Alert" mechanism to sound the alarm over precipitous declines in certain whale species or populations, the impacts are considerable. In 2024, the vaquita, a species of porpoise nearly wiped out due to gillnet entanglement, earned the distinction of being the focus of the first Extinction Alert, generating headlines around the world.

Indeed, the vaquita and the SC, as Switzerland pointed out following cuts to the SC's budget, have several things in common: "Both are unique, and we should take care of them. Meeting by meeting, we've highlighted the importance of preserving them. But in both cases, the relevant numbers only go in one direction. Losing the vaquita would be tragic. By losing the SC, all cetaceans will suffer." He stressed that cutting the budget of SC risked being the equivalent to cutting the reputation and credibility of the SC. "How can we convince governments and universities and other organizations that the work of the SC is important, when the Commission cuts the SC budget every time we meet?"

At least the slashing was minor in the budget for the next biennial. The IWC agreed to a 3% increase each year for two years to keep pace with inflation—a welcome change after a decade of no increases. The Commission also agreed in principle to 5% increases each year for the 2027-2028 biennial, which holds out the possibility of more financial relief to come. Until then, delegates expressed hope that voluntary contributions could compensate for these reductions to SC budget lines, and indeed, generous donations were pledged by civil society groups. Further fundraising efforts will benefit from the SC's new Communication Initiative, which aims to summarize and broadcast the SC's work to Commissioners as well as to the public. With an all-woman team elected as the SC Chair and Vice-Chair for the first time in IWC history, delegates expressed excitement over further innovations to come.

IWC as the Global Epicenter of Whale Management and Conservation

As IWC-69 concluded its business not just on schedule, but early, thanks to efficient time management, it seemed clear that "the predictions of the death of the IWC are greatly exaggerated," as Acting Chair Gales put it, paraphrasing Mark Twain.

Three new resolutions were adopted on: cooperation with the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) in Antarctica; fostering synergies with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement); and international legal obligations in commercial whaling activities. The consensus renewal of ASW catch limits proves IWC's commitment to enabling the continuity and sustainability of aboriginal subsistence hunting.

In light of these outcomes, the suggestion that the IWC has outlived its usefulness seems "absurd," as one delegate put it. "At almost 80 years of age, the IWC, in my strong view, has never been more relevant globally," said Acting Chair Gales to the plenary. Judging by the applause, most Commissioners agreed.

Upcoming Meetings

CCAMLR-43: The forty-third meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources will address issues relevant to the management of marine resources and the impact of climate change. **dates:** 14-25 October 2024 **location:** Hobart, Australia **www:** meetings.ccamlr.org/es/ccamlr-43

2024 Arctic Circle Assembly: The Arctic Circle Assembly is the largest annual international gathering on the Arctic, attended by more than 2,000 participants from over 60 countries. **dates:** 17-19 October 2024 **location:** Reykjavík, Iceland **www:** arcticcircle.org/assemblies/2024-arctic-circle-assembly

UN Biodiversity Conference 2024 (CBD COP 16): The sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing will convene for the first time since the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. **dates:** 21 October - 1 November 2024 **location:** Cali, Colombia **www:** cbd.int/conferences/2024

UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29): This event will include the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 29), the 19th meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 19), and the sixth meeting of the COP serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 6) that will convene to complete the first enhanced transparency framework and the new collective quantified goal on finance, among other matters. The 61st sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA 61) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI 61) will also meet. **dates:** 11-22 November 2024 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** unfccc.int/cop29

Plastics Treaty INC-5: The 5th meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, is the last scheduled meeting of the INC. **dates:** 25 November - 1 December 2024 **location:** Busan, Republic of Korea **www:** unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution/session-5

Seventy-eighth meeting of the CITES Standing Committee: The Standing Committee provides policy guidance to the Secretariat on the implementation of the Convention, oversees the management of the Secretariat's budget, and oversees and coordinates the work of other committees and working groups. **dates:** 3-8 February 2025 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **www:** cites.org/eng/sc/78

First Part of the 30th Session of the ISA Council: The International Seabed Authority (ISA) Council will meet to deliberate over, among other things, negotiations of the draft regulations for the exploitation of minerals in the Area. **dates:** 17-28 March 2025 **location:** Kingston, Jamaica **www:** isa.org.jm/ sessions/30th-session-2025/

First Substantive Meeting of the BBNJ PrepCom: The first substantive meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Entry into Force of the Agreement under the UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction and the Convening of the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement will begin work on the cluster of issues agreed by the organizational session. **dates:** 14-25 April 2025 (TBC) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** un.org/bbnjagreement

Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC-3): Co-Chaired by France and Costa Rica, the Conference aims to generate transformative action and provide solutions the Ocean needs, supported by ocean science and funding for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 (life below water). **dates:** 9-13 June 2025 **location:** Nice, France **www:** sdgs.un.org/conferences/ocean2025

IWC-70: The 70th session of the International Whaling Commission will continue to advance the work of the convention. **dates:** September/October 2026 (TBC) **location:** Australia **www:** iwc.int

For additional upcoming events, see: sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

ASW	Aboriginal subsistence whaling
BBNJ	Marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction
BSC	Budget Sub-Committee
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CC	IWC Conservation Committee
CMP	Conservation Management Plan
F&A	IWC Finance and Administration Committee
ICRW	International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MPA	Marine protected area
RoP	Rules of Procedure
SAWS	South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (proposed)
SC	IWC Scientific Committee
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
WGOE	Working Group on Operational Effectiveness