

18.34 Cetacean Conservation and the International Whaling Commission Moratorium

RECALLING IUCN's long-standing support for a worldwide moratorium on commercial whaling as expressed in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy and in various resolutions of the General Assembly;

DEPLORING that, although the International Whaling Commission (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling has been in force since April 1986, whaling has continued under programmes of scientific research, the lethal aspects of which have failed to meet all of the IWC's scientific criteria;

NOTING that in its required review in 1990 on the effects of the moratorium on whale stocks, the IWC's Scientific Committee concluded that these effects could not be assessed because the slow growth rate of whale populations meant that there was no possibility that there had been a substantial change in the whale numbers since the moratorium came into effect, and that under present monitoring methods it is only possible to detect major changes in abundance;

AWARE that while the IWC expects to have received from its Scientific Committee by May 1991 agreed technical details of a possible revised management procedure, consideration of the legal and practical implementation of any such procedure, including the overdue improvement of national inspection and international observer arrangements, has not yet begun;

FURTHER AWARE that the objectives defined by the IWC for such a revised procedure do not take fully into account the conditions included in the World Conservation Strategy that no commercial whaling should be resumed until the consequences for the ecosystems concerned of removing large portions of the whales' populations, and such populations' capacity for recovery, can be predicted;

NOTING the critical necessity of taking into account, in addition to other scientific advice, assessment of potential risks to cetaceans resulting from oceanic environmental degradation, including such increasing threats as pollution, loss of habitat, shipping, oil and gas exploration, and the use of oceanic pelagic driftnets and other relatively unselective fishing techniques;

RECALLING that at its 42nd Annual Meeting, in July 1990, the IWC adopted a resolution concluding that the present Japanese research programme involving the killing of whales is not structured so as to contribute information essential to the rational management of these stocks;

RECALLING ALSO that at its 42nd Annual Meeting, the IWC adopted a resolution concluding that the present Norwegian scientific research programme involving the killing of whales is not adequately structured so as to contribute to or materially facilitate the completion of IWC's Comprehensive Assessment of Whale Stocks, nor to address critically important research needs;

NOTING WITH REGRET that, notwithstanding the aforementioned IWC resolutions as well as Recommendation 17.46 of the 17th General Assembly (1988), expressing concern that continuation of whaling under special permits contrary to IWC recommendations reduces the effectiveness of the IWC in providing for the conservation of whale stocks worldwide, the Japanese and Norwegian programmes of such whaling are continuing and may be expanded;

AWARE that the UNEP Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Management and Utilization of Marine Mammals, which was formally adopted in 1984 and which has been endorsed by IUCN, includes as a basic long-term objective, "Ensuring that any exploitative or low-consumptive use of marine mammal populations is conducted in a humane manner and with the minimum disruptive effect on the populations";

SHARING the concerns of IWC Member States, as expressed in reports of the IWC's Humane Killing Working Group, over the need for developing humane killing methods to avoid excess cruelty in any taking of cetaceans;

RECALLING that the designation of the Indian Ocean as a whale sanctuary, as decided by the IWC in 1979 initially for a period of ten years, was in 1989 extended provisionally for a further three years pending conclusion of the development of a revised management procedure;

BEING COGNIZANT that powerful moral and ethical questions have been raised globally regarding the killing of whales for profit;

RECALLING the belief affirmed in Resolution 15.19 of the 15th General Assembly (1981) on Large and Small Cetaceans that the majority of nations now hold the view that for scientific, ecological and aesthetic reasons, whales should no longer be killed for industry;

AWARE that the Governments of Iceland and Norway are pressing for the immediate resumption of commercial whaling of some stocks;

DEPLORING that some States announced at the 1990 IWC meeting that they will consider withdrawing from the IWC and resuming whaling outside its jurisdiction if the IWC does not establish commercial catch limits on some stocks at its 1991 Annual Meeting;

The General Assembly of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, at its 18th Session in Perth, Australia, 28 November-5 December 1990:

1. CALLS on the IWC, taking into account all of the above factors, to maintain the existing moratorium on the commercial killing of all whale stocks indefinitely;
CALLS on the Governments of Norway and the Soviet Union to withdraw their objections to the moratorium decision, and on the Governments of Brazil, Japan, Norway, Peru, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Soviet Union to withdraw their reservations to the CITES Appendix 1 listing of cetacean species;
3. URGES the Governments of Japan and Norway to terminate those aspects of their present programmes of research that involve the killing of

whales;

4. STRESSES the need for continuation and expansion of non-lethal research on living whales under the auspices of the IWC;
5. CALLS on the IWC to support an indefinite continuation of the Indian Ocean Whale Sanctuary and consider widening its boundaries to include the full migratory ranges of the whale species and populations within it;
6. CALLS FURTHER for the IWC to consider the creation of other sanctuaries within a comprehensive system for the conservation of whales;
7. URGES the IWC to report to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on the progress it has made in ensuring the conservation of whale stocks, in the light of the resolution adopted at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, which called for an immediate 10-year moratorium on commercial whaling.

Note: This recommendation was adopted by consensus. The Denmark State member delegation indicated that had there been a vote, the delegation would have abstained, because the Danish Government had not taken any position on the content of operative paragraph 1, nor to the effect that the principle of sustainable utilization should not apply to whale stocks. The Norway State member delegation said that their delegation would have voted against the recommendation.

