

18.35 Protection of Small Cetaceans

NOTING with grave concern the extent and seriousness of the problems faced by small cetaceans in particular, as outlined in *Dolphins, Porpoises, and Whales: An Action Plan for the Conservation of Biological Diversity, 1988-1992*, prepared by the Cetacean Specialist Group of the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC);

AWARE that many of the over 60 species of dolphins, porpoises and whales known as small cetaceans are subject to a variety of threats around the world;

NOTING that small cetaceans and other marine animals are threatened by various problems, including entanglement in fishing gear used by local fisheries, habitat destruction, and pollution;

CONSCIOUS that many of the threats are the result directly or indirectly, of exploitation of fish stocks by large-scale commercial and industrial fisheries and direct hunts;

CONCERNED by the recent escalation in the hunting of small cetaceans globally, and by the continuing mortality of dolphins resulting from deliberate encirclement by yellowfin tuna purse-seine fleets in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, and from the use of large-scale high seas driftnets;

RECALLING the large-scale die-offs of bottlenose dolphins along the U.S. east coast in 1987 and 1988, and in the Gulf of Mexico in 1990, and of striped dolphins in the Mediterranean in 1990;

AWARE that local populations of some species are believed to be under threat as a result of human activities;

CONCERNED that at least three species—the vaquita (*Phocoena sinus*), baiji (*Lipotes vexillifer*), and the Indus River dolphin (*Platanista minor*)—are considered close to extinction;

APPRECIATING the concern regarding the status of small cetaceans expressed in resolutions adopted by the 42nd Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in July 1990;

RECOGNIZING that small cetaceans also are a concern of several regional conventions, in recognition of the threats that they face;

AWARE nonetheless that there is no single body presently providing international protection to all species of small cetaceans;

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

1. URGES that the recommended conservation actions and projects outlined in the aforementioned SSC Action Plan for 1988-1992 be implemented and funded as fully as possible, with the highest priority being given to projects in the plan relating to species or populations at risk of imminent extinction;
2. COMMENDS the IWC for the practical steps undertaken at its 42nd Annual Meeting requesting its Scientific Committee to commence a process of drawing together all available relevant information on the present status of the stocks of small cetaceans which are subjected to significant directed and incidental takes and on the impact of those takes on the stocks, and of providing an assessment of the present threats to the stocks concerned;
3. COMMENDS ALSO the efforts of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Convention

for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Convention for the Conservation of European Wildlife and Habitats, the North Sea Ministers' Conference, and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission for steps they have taken, and are continuing to take, towards protecting small cetacean populations as appropriate according to their jurisdiction;

4. REPEATS ITS ENDORSEMENT, in Recommendation 18.36, of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/225 concerning large-scale pelagic driftnet fishing and again urges all members of the international community fully to implement its provisions at the latest by 30 June 1992;
5. CALLS UPON the Government of Japan to fully implement the Resolution adopted by the 42nd Annual Meeting of the IWC, and to follow the urgent advice from the IWC Scientific Committee, to immediately reduce the takes of Dall's porpoises (*Phocoenoides dalli*) at least to the pre-1986 levels of approximately 10,000 animals per year, and to consider even further reductions when planned new stock assessments are completed;
6. CALLS UPON all States to eliminate direct commercial kills of small cetaceans conducted in their waters or by their vessels; while recognizing aboriginal rights for subsistence and cultural purposes consistent with conservation;
7. SUPPORTS additional actions to end the use of destructive fishing gear and practices which may cause large-scale mortality of small cetaceans;
8. URGES the IWC to utilize the expertise of its Scientific Committee in relation to small cetaceans, to urgently consider its recommendations, and, on the basis thereof, to take appropriate action through resolutions and/or schedule provisions where needed to assure protection for small cetaceans;
9. URGES States and other management bodies concerned with small cetaceans to cooperate with the Scientific Committee of the IWC and to take appropriate actions based on its findings;

URGES that further efforts be made towards the development and implementation, at the earliest opportunity, of a comprehensive system of measures for the worldwide conservation of all cetacean species, covering direct hunting while recognizing aboriginal subsistence and cultural rights, habitat destruction and pollution, fisheries interactions, and other threats cetaceans may face.