

#### 4.025 Avoiding extinction of the Vaquita porpoise *Phocoena sinus*

RECALLING that the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* has classified the Vaquita - a porpoise species endemic to the Upper Gulf of California, Mexico - as 'Vulnerable' in 1978, 'Endangered' in 1990 and 'Critically Endangered' since 1996;

FURTHER RECALLING Resolution 19.61 *By-Catch of Non-Target Species* adopted by the 19th IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, 1994), which expressed concern that the by-catch rate at that time posed a serious threat to the Vaquita, and urged states and organizations to adopt reasonable measures to minimize the by-catch of non-target species, including limiting the fishing of target species if necessary;

RECOGNIZING that the scientific committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the International Committee for the Recovery of the Vaquita (CIRVA) agree on the need to eliminate gill nets from the Vaquita's entire habitat immediately, since they constitute the greatest single cause of Vaquita mortality;

THANKING the President of Mexico for his commitment to the Vaquita, by including it in the Conservation Programme for Endangered Species 2007-2012, and the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources for developing a socio-economic compensation strategy for the reduction of fishing, the elimination of gill nets and the increased surveillance of the Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta Biosphere Reserve;

ALSO THANKING the Governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States, and Mexican and international conservation groups that have supported the scientific, technical and financial side of the process to provide the institutional support needed to ensure that the proposal for the recovery of the Vaquita becomes a reality in the medium term;

COMMENDING IWC Resolution 2007-5 for the concern expressed about the Vaquita, and its request to the international community to support Mexico's efforts to eliminate by-catch of the Vaquita;

ALARMED that, despite two decades of generalized international concern, the species' population is believed to have decreased to a mere 150 individuals;

NOTING that the market demand for shrimp from the Upper Gulf of California drives the fishing activities in the Vaquita's habitat;

RECOGNIZING that the socio-economic effect on the region's fishing communities of the elimination of gill nets should be taken into account;

CONCERNED that the implementation of the current recovery plans lacks the support of Mexico's National Commission of Aquaculture and Fisheries (CONAPESCA), which is delaying the elimination of permits and gill nets from the Vaquita's habitat, by focusing on a lesser threat to the species, such as the level of the flow of the River Colorado towards the Upper Gulf; and

ALSO CONCERNED that illegal fishing continues in the Vaquita's habitat and because surveillance efforts are insufficient;

#### **The World Conservation Congress at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008:**

1. URGES the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT-CONANP), and the National Commission of Aquaculture and Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA-CONAPESCA) of Mexico to sign an intersectoral agreement, the contents of which:
  - (a) establish immediately a gill-net fishing exclusion zone that covers the entire Vaquita Refuge decreed by the SEMARNAT on September 8th, 2005;
  - (b) continue withdrawal of fishing and gill-net permits in the Upper Gulf of California and River Colorado Delta Biosphere Reserve between 2009 and 2012, simultaneously promoting productive alternatives and means of fishing that are safe for the Vaquita;

- (c) allocate financial resources to ensure the longterm strategy;
  - (d) implement effectively the Action programme for the protection of the Vaquita (PACE); and
  - (e) reinforce the monitoring and surveillance of the Upper Gulf of California and River Colorado Delta Biosphere Reserve;
2. URGES CONAPESCA, the fishing agency of the Mexican Government, to:
- (a) complete a register of all legal fishermen in the Upper Gulf of California in order to gain a better understanding of the fishing activities in the Vaquita's habitat;
  - (b) publish this register on their website and the transparency portal of the Federal Institute of Access to Public Information (IFAI);
  - (c) work in collaboration with the Federal Attorney's Office for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA) in order to ensure compliance with the fishing and environmental regulations in the Vaquita Refuge;
  - (d) implement, in collaboration with CONANP, a single registration and identification system for vessels authorized to operate in the Upper Gulf of California, in order to eradicate illegal fishing;
  - (e) ensure that a mechanism for the provision of economic compensation is developed for the withdrawal of fishing permits in the Upper Gulf of California before the end of the 2008 shrimp fishing season; and
  - (f) promote a change to Vaquita-friendly fishing techniques among fishing communities in the Upper Gulf of California;
3. RECOMMENDS that all organizations, states, sponsors and private importers of shrimp from the Upper Gulf of California, including, but not limited to, Ocean Garden Products, support the Mexican Government, providing technical and financial support in order to eliminate gill nets, and to promote economic alternatives and means of fishing that are safe for the Vaquita in the Upper Gulf of California region;
4. ENCOURAGES the Governments of Canada and the United States of America to continue to support the strategy for the conservation of the Vaquita and to provide Mexico with technical and financial assistance in order to protect the Vaquita through the *North American Conservation Action Plan for the Vaquita (NACAP Vaquita)*, which has the approval of the Canadian Government; and
5. URGES governments and appropriate international organizations to follow the example of Mexico and its many partners that have mobilized to prevent the extinction of the Vaquita, seeking solutions to prevent the extinction of other cetaceans, which are threatened through incidental capture in fisheries;

**In addition, the World Conservation Congress, at its 4th Session in Barcelona, Spain, 5-14 October 2008, provides the following guidance concerning implementation of the IUCN Programme 2009-2012:**

6. ASKS the Director General to provide, as far as possible, technical and scientific help to Mexico in order to avoid the extinction of the Vaquita.