

Safeguarding the Endangered narrow-ridged finless porpoise (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*) in the Yellow Sea

RECOGNISING that the narrow-ridged finless porpoise (*Neophocaena asiaeorientalis*) is endemic to the East Asia region and that the species was included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Endangered (A2bcde+3bcde+4bcde) in 2017, because of historical and anticipated future population declines;

AWARE that *N. asiaeorientalis* occurs in China, Korea and Japan, with the largest number of *N. asiaeorientalis* occurring off the western and southern Korean Peninsula;

GIVEN that the number of *N. asiaeorientalis* off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula is estimated to have declined from 36,000 in 2005 to 13,000 in 2011, a decrease of 64%, and that this decline is likely continuing, although no more-recent abundance estimate is available to confirm this and there is no time-series of estimates for assessing trends throughout the entire Yellow Sea;

TROUBLED that the continued decline in abundance of *N. asiaeorientalis* can be attributed mainly to bycatch in gillnet, trawl-net and stow-net fisheries in the area;

CONCERNED about other pressures on ecosystems associated with the species, from fishing activities such as fish farming and lost or abandoned (ghost) fishing nets;

NOTING that additional efforts are needed to monitor the status of the species and its populations, especially given the very limited surveys in the Republic of Korea's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ);

DETERMINED to promote action to reduce the toll from fishing on *N. asiaeorientalis*;

ACKNOWLEDGING the efforts of the government of the Republic of Korea to conserve *N. asiaeorientalis* in-situ, which include the following:

- a. designating an area of 210 ha off the coast of Goseong Province as a national Marine Species Protected Area for conserving *N. asiaeorientalis* under the name of 'Gyeongnam Goseong-gun Narrow Ridged Finless Porpoise Marine Species Protected Area' as of 31 December 2019;
- b. including *N. asiaeorientalis* in the national list of marine protected species as of 28 September 2016, which prohibits any commercial activities that cause a threat to the species;
- c. designing and experimenting with excluder devices to reduce mortality of the species due to bycatch; and
- d. monitoring the population of *N. asiaeorientalis* off the coast of the Republic of Korea, along with the levels of bycatch; and

COMMITTED to reversing the declines of *N. asiaeorientalis* and stabilising its populations such that the species is eventually evaluated as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS that countries bordering the Yellow Sea, with support from IUCN State and Government Agency Members and other Members working in the region, complete the following prioritised actions while also advancing research:
 - a. form a regional working group to address threats to *N. asiaeorientalis*;
 - b. hold a direct consultation with stakeholders (especially fishers) and communities that influence the future of *N. asiaeorientalis* to address conservation concerns for the species, and maintain that consultation;
 - c. conduct robust, comprehensive research on population dynamics, distribution, habitat conditions and movement patterns of *N. asiaeorientalis*;
 - d. improve monitoring of *N. asiaeorientalis* bycatch across space and time and by fishery and gear type;
 - e. analyse and develop effective solutions to environmental threats to *N. asiaeorientalis*;
 - f. develop and implement bycatch mitigation measures for *N. asiaeorientalis*, including spatial and temporal management, gear modification and safe release of porpoises from fishing gear;
 - g. establish support mechanisms for fishers who implement proven bycatch mitigation measures; and

h. analyse impacts of fishing and fishing-related activities on mortality and abundance of *N. asiaeorientalis*; and

2. INVITES relevant intergovernmental bodies to engage actively – and to support states in the region – in addressing issues of population decline and bycatch of *N. asiaeorientalis*.