

Establishment of a mid-frequency active (MFA – 1 to 10 KHz) sonar moratorium for maritime military exercises conducted in Macaronesia

EMPHASISING that healthy whale populations help to maintain necessary ocean balance by providing ecological services such as keeping fish stocks healthy, cycling nutrients and minimising the effects of climate change;

RECOGNISING that Macaronesia is a cetacean biodiversity hot spot, which hosts 85% of the whale and dolphin species described in the North Atlantic Ocean;

RECALLING its strategic geographical location, crossed by the migratory paths of the great whales, travelling between the tropical waters of the Central-Western Atlantic and feeding grounds in the North Sea, Norwegian Sea and Arctic Ocean;

RECALLING that, pursuant to Article 65 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), coastal states have the right and the duty to ensure the protection of their cetacean species;

NOTING that the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), in its report to the 56th meeting of the IWC (Sorrento, 2004), concluded that military sonar, seismic exploration, and other noise sources such as shipping, pose a significant and increasing threat to cetaceans, both acute and chronic;

CONCERNED about the substantive and growing body of corroborating scientific evidence suggesting that a wide range of whale, dolphin and porpoise species can be impacted by the sound produced during military activities;

RECALLING that Resolution 3.068 *Undersea noise pollution* (Bangkok, 2004) requested the Director General “to identify and implement measures to promote among world governments the reduction of anthropogenic ocean noise”;

NOTING ALSO that non-binding resolution B6-0089/2004 of the European Parliament recommended European Union Member States to immediately restrict the use of active naval sonars in their jurisdictional waters, and that in 2016, the IWC Scientific Committee recognised that mitigating impact of noise on cetaceans is a way to increase populations' resilience and improve their future prospects in the face of less tractable stressors, such as climate change;

MINDFUL that scientific evidence supports the effectiveness of the moratorium on the use of mid-frequency active (MFA – which for the purposes of this motion is defined as 1 to 10 KHz) sonar in maritime military exercises around the Canary Islands for avoiding atypical mass strandings of beaked whales; and

NOTING ALSO that maritime military exercises refer to those involving naval ships and military aircraft capable of employing MFA sonobuoys or dipping sonars, and do not include security operations;

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

1. CALLS ON all states with Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Macaronesian region to:

a. support the establishment of an MFA sonar moratorium during maritime military exercises, involving naval ships and military aircraft capable of employing MFA sonobuoys or dipping sonars, conducted within their EEZs; and

b. ban the use of this high-energy sonar in maritime military exercises within the limits of their EEZs; and

2. REQUESTS the Director General to convey this Resolution to all states with EEZs in the region, as well as to the European Parliament.