



Animal Welfare Institute

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BY ELECTRONIC MAIL AND HAND DELIVERY

The Honourable Jeannine Compton-Antoine, Chair
International Whaling Commission
c/o Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Production, Fisheries and Rural Development
Government Buildings
Castries
SAINT LUCIA

Dear Madame Chair:

On behalf of the undersigned non-governmental organizations (NGOs), we are writing to respectfully request enhanced speaking rights for civil society during the plenary deliberations at the upcoming 65th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC or Commission) in Portoroz, Slovenia.

The issue of civil society participation at IWC meetings is a matter of considerable ongoing interest to NGOs. As you are aware, over the past few IWC plenary meetings some opportunities have been provided for verbal comments and statements from NGOs, but regrettably this has fallen short of the speaking rights conferred on NGOs in other international environmental conventions.

Next week there will be a new opportunity for the IWC to provide NGOs with greater opportunities to participate in its meetings. *IWC/65/12 Draft Resolution on Civil Society Participation and Transparency at the IWC* will be discussed by the Finance and Administration Committee during its meeting on September 13, before being discussed in plenary. We welcome this important effort by the Government of Chile to continue the evolution of IWC practices and procedures.

We recognize that a resolution cannot be implemented until it is agreed by the Commission. As recent practice has demonstrated though, the Chair of the Commission does have discretion to call on observers to speak.

We therefore respectfully request that, until a decision is made on this resolution, you temporarily allow NGO speaking rights consistent with the change to the Rules of Procedure as proposed in IWC/65/12, **Annex B, A. Right to Speak**

1. The Chair shall call upon speakers in the order in which they signify their desire to speak, ***with the exception of accredited Observers, which should be allowed to speak only after all Commissioners desiring to speak do so. As a general rule, Observers will only be allowed to speak once at each Agenda item under discussion, and at the discretion of the Chair.***

In advance of the plenary, we would be pleased to discuss with you and the Secretary, the logistics of facilitating such participation in the meeting. We believe that the procedure adopted by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) represents an appropriate and sound model to follow.

The undersigned NGOs, many of whom are represented by lawyers, scientists, veterinarians, economists and social-scientists, bring considerable expertise to the issues of relevance to the Commission. Moreover, the NGO community collectively represent the views of hundreds of millions of members of the public—citizens and voting constituents of the Contracting Governments of the IWC. Considering this - and recognizing the significant funds the NGOs pay to attend IWC meetings - we trust that you, the IWC Secretariat, members of the Bureau, and Contracting Governments recognize the important contribution that NGOs can make to IWC meetings if provided with appropriate and timely opportunities to take the floor, at your discretion, on any or all agenda items throughout the meeting.

In addition to providing evidence, data, and input that may be instructive or helpful to contracting governments, other conventions show that providing full opportunities for civil society participation including speaking rights for each agenda item, can enhance debate and decision making. Greater integration of NGOs can also result in increased NGO commitment to the convention's work, including in the form of funding to support projects.

Finally, we advocate against a reprise of models trialed in recent years in which NGOs from each 'side' are invited to speak on pre-determined agenda items. This severely limits the ability of NGOs to request the floor to speak reactively to the floor debate. Moreover, the pigeon-holing of NGOs into either 'pro-whaling' or 'anti-whaling' camps is an unfair over-simplification of the broad spectrum of views held by the NGO community and results in NGOs being defined within the old 'battle lines' which the IWC has actively sought to break down in recent meetings.

Thank you for considering this important request. We would be grateful if representatives of the undersigned organizations could meet with you and the IWC Secretariat prior to the start of plenary to discuss this matter. I will contact you when I arrive in Portoroz to determine if such a meeting would be possible.

We look forward to working with you, the IWC Secretariat, and all Contracting Governments to ensure that IWC/65 is a successful meeting. Should you have any questions or need clarification on any issue raised herein, please contact me at susan@awionline.org or, via telephone, at (202) 446-2123.

Respectfully,



Susan Millward
Executive Director
Animal Welfare Institute

cc: Dr. Simon Brockington, Executive Secretary
Ms. Donna Petrachenko, Commissioner, Australia and Chair, Finance and Administration Subcommittee
Mr. Frederic Chernay, Commissioner, Belgium
Mr. Mike Akyeampong, Commissioner, Republic of Ghana
Mr. Akira Nakamae, Commissioner, Japan
Mr. Max Lopez, Cornejo, Commissioner, Panama
Mr. Ryan Wulff, Deputy Commissioner, United States of America

On behalf of:

American Cetacean Society
Australian Marine Conservation Society
BlueVoice
Campaign Whale
Centro de Conservación Cetacea
Cetacean Society International
Dolphin Connection
Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness

Environmental Investigation Agency
Fluke Foundation
Fundación Cethus
Great Whale Conservancy
Greenpeace
Green Vegans The New Human Ecology
Humane Society International
Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Iruka & Kujira (Dolphin and Whale) Action Network
NABU International
Natural Resources Defense Council
OceanCare
Origami Whales Project
Project Jonah
Pro Wildlife
Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals, Denmark
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
The Whaleman Foundation
Whales Alive
World Animal Protection
WWF