

Report from the International Whaling Commission
Schedule which sets out specific
decisions

resource developments on cetaceans. Recent work focuses on engagement with IMO and efforts to address underwater noise from shipping. A global review on marine seismic surveys has just begun.

- x Marine Science the IWC is a leading exponent of many aspects of cetacean research in coastal areas and upon the high seas including that related to biodiversity, sustainability the precautionary approach, quantitative incorporation of ecosystem considerations, threats to cetaceans and their mitigation. With an evergrowing membership and focused mentoring of new participants (including trainees), the Scientific Committee is nurturing incoming scientists to ensure continuity in its work.

Like all organisations across the world IWC has been operating in very difficult circumstances recently due to the COVID19 pandemic. This has affected the size and format of IWC meetings the two most recent Scientific Committee meetings were held virtually and the Conservation Committee met virtually in September 2020 and the Commission meeting has been postponed until Autumn 2021. The pandemic also presents a number of challenges to scientific research capacity building and implementation of IWC work programmes. However, despite these challenges opportunities have also arisen as a result of the reduction in human activities. Reports of cetaceans returning to areas where they have previously been excluded (e.g. during vessel traffic), quieter oceans potentially allowing animals to communicate more easily and a potential reduction in overall stress for ocean dwellers are all scenarios that offer a glimpse into how cetaceans may respond in times of rapid environmental change. The need to switch to virtual meetings accelerated discussion of how we might achieve long term reductions in our carbon footprint overall. We are particularly pleased that participation in virtual meetings was stronger from a broader range of countries including the developing world.

As a global community it is important that we can identify lessons we might learn from COVID19 and move forward with a socially and environmentally responsible recovery. The recent Scientific Committee of the IWC recognised the importance of the 'One Health' approach which recognises that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.

Detailed progress report relevant to sections of the General Assembly Resolution 75/239

1. Capacity building

Section II of resolution 75/239 addresses the need for capacity building and paragraph 11 "Emphasizes that capacity building is essential to ensure that States, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as coastal African States, are able to fully implement the Convention, benefit from the sustainable development of the oceans and seas and participate fully in global and regional forums on ocean affairs and the law of the sea." The IWC contributes to such capacity building efforts through a number of programmes.

- x The IWC entanglement programme was established in 2011 to address the growing problem of whale entanglement in fishing gear and marine debris by building a global network of professionally trained and equipped entanglement responders. Since its first training workshop in 2012 this initiative has provided IWC consensus training to 1,293 participants from 34 countries. In addition, it has hosted apprentices from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Norway and Oman, with apprentices scheduled for this year from Kenya and Russia. The

programme now has eight trainers from North, Central and South America, as well as the Pacific Islands and Africa, with the capacity to deliver training in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

- x The IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI) was established in 2016 in recognition that bycatch in fishing gears is the major conservation issue posed to cetaceans. The BMI aims to raise awareness at national and international levels of the need to address cetacean bycatch and share the tools available to understand and mitigate the issue. It aims to promote solutions for monitoring and management and promote collaborative, multidisciplinary and inclusive approaches to bring about lasting change. The BMI is collaborating with partners to build capacity within national governments and fisheries management bodies, to support decision makers in the most appropriate tools for bycatch assessment and management. This includes training workshops on bycatch management methodologies, collaboration on pilot projects (including Peru, Republic of Congo) to test and demonstrate solutions and working on novel approaches to sustainable financing for bycatch research and management implementation. The BMI's Expert Panel also provides multidisciplinary expertise and provides technical advice upon request.

- x The IWC Strandings Initiative aims to build capacity of countries to respond to and investigate cetacean strandings including through the provision of virtual real-time advice during ongoing strandings events, allocation of funding for emergency response and investigations

2. Marine environment and marine resources

Section IX of Resolution 75/23 addresses the Marine environment and marine resources, the need to protect and preserve the marine environment and its living marine resources against pollution and physical degradation. This reflects key priorities for IWC which is active in several areas addressed in this section including:

2.1 Climate change

Paragraph 215 of the Resolution “Encourages States, individually or in collaboration with relevant international organizations and bodies, to enhance their scientific activity to better understand the effects of climate change on the marine environment and marine biodiversity. . . .”

IWC'S current work on climate change is primarily undertaken by the IWC's Scientific Committee, though the topic is now addressed jointly with the Conservation Committee. This has been and continues to be considered through a range of scientific and technical workshops and has included work focussed on biological, socio-economic and development effects on the Arctic. The Scientific Committee recognises that climate change has a bearing across its entire agenda, given the far-reaching implications to cetaceans of observed and predicted changes in the marine environment and associated changes in human behaviour.

The IWC is planning work (including a combined CC/SC workshop) to selectively review and consolidate conclusions and recommendations from previous IWC work in light of recent new information and developments related to climate science and modelling predictions, direct and indirect effects on cetaceans, cetacean ecology and ecological population modelling incorporating habitat related changes. The focus will be on how to better integrate this issue into IWC's work programmes, identification of research prog

(IUCN) and the Agreement for the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS). The workshop looked at how the IUCN's programme

International Whaling Commission, 2019. Contribution from the Secretariat of the International Whaling Commission to Part 1 of the report from the UN Secretary-General to the nineteenth meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea: Anthropogenic Underwater Noise. [Paper available from the Office of this Journal].

International Whaling Commission. 2019. Report of the Joint IWC/ACCOBAMS workshop to evaluate how the data and process used to identify Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) can assist the IWC to identify areas of high risk for ship strike. Paper SC/68a/REP presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2019, Nairobi, Kenya (unpublished). 31pp. [Paper available from the Office of this Journal].

International Whaling Commission. 2020a. Report of the IWC Workshop on Marine Debris: The Way Forward, 3 December, La Garriga, Spain. Paper SC/68b/REP/03 presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2020, Cambridge, UK (unpublished). 38pp. [Paper available from the Office of this Journal].

International Whaling Commission, 2020b. Report of the meeting on advancing efforts to address underwater noise from shipping, Virtual meeting, 11 May 2020. Paper SC/68b/REP06 presented to the IWC Scientific Committee, May 2020, Cambridge, UK (unpublished). 38pp.