

## **NGO Priority issues for IWC62**

### **(Aside from the Chair/Vice Chair's Proposal on the future of the IWC)**

**June 2010**

In no particular order, these are the priority issues (aside from the Chair/Vice Chair's Proposal on the future of the IWC - (IWC62/7)) that the NGOs believe should be raised by the UK at IWC 62, Agadir.

These points are supported by the following organisations:

- Campaign Whale
- Environmental Investigation Agency
- Greenpeace
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- The Mammal Society
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
- Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society
- World Society for the Protection of Animals
- WWF - UK

#### **1. Strong focus on the development of the IWC's conservation work to address threats to cetaceans in the marine environment, including:**

- Bycatch
- Ship strikes
- Climate change

We urge the UK to advocate that the primary focus of the work of the IWC must be to address the threats to cetaceans.

We also ask that the UK reminds participants in meetings in Agadir that, consistent with the Commission's agreement with respect to the RMS/RMP, any consideration of catch limits must include deductions for total catches over time including bycatch.

#### *Item 13 of Agenda - Conservation Management Plans:*

We note that there will be discussion of these plans in both the Scientific Committee and the Conservation Committee and that a small specialist group will construct a list of candidate management plans and report progress to the plenary. We will give you detailed comments when their reports become available. We believe that work of this kind is the real future of the IWC and should be warmly welcomed.

#### **2. Sakhalin & Western North Pacific Gray Whales**

A 3-D seismic survey (Rosneft Lebedenskoie) will take place just as western gray whales are arriving to feed in near-shore waters off of Sakhalin Island. There is no evidence that a precautionary approach has been taken in planning this survey, which has significant potential for disturbing feeding and nursing. We ask the UK to support on the plenary floor the recommendation expected from the Scientific Committee urging the Government of Russia to postpone the Lebedinskoe survey, and support the establishment of a Sakhalin Marine Federal Wildlife Reserve along the Piltun Spit for the protection and monitoring of critical grey whale habitat.

### **3. Safety at sea**

Under this item (Item 11 of Agenda) we have seen a series of one sided presentations by Japan with those accused of unsafe actions unrepresented. We note that media reports of investigations into one of the most recent of these, which resulted in the sinking of one of the vessels involved, appear to indicate that there was fault on both sides. We suggest that the UK work with the flag and port states involved (Australia, Netherlands, New Zealand) to ensure that such presentations are eliminated or balanced and that the IWC does not make any statement that favors one side over the other. The IWC is not a maritime court and has no jurisdiction in such matters.

### **4. Human health issues associated with the consumption of cetaceans**

A briefing on the consumption of contaminated whale meat will be circulated shortly. The coalition of NGOs working on this issue would like to see a constructive discussion under this Plenary agenda item and will work with Commissioners in Agadir.

### **5. Small Cetaceans**

We urge the UK to raise the issue of Japan's coastal cetacean hunts in the discussions on the Future of the IWC and again in the Plenary agenda items relevant to small cetaceans.

We endorse and support Belgium's approach regarding small cetaceans and very much welcome the UK's support for this.

### **6. Oil and gas development**

The risk of an oil spill is a clear and huge concern in the Arctic, with the potential to pose a grave threat to Arctic livelihoods and marine wildlife. Despite reported technological advances, situations commonly exist when oil spill response technologies are not sufficient to clean up spilled oil. These "response gaps" are perhaps most significant in the Arctic, where extreme cold, moving ice floes, high winds and low visibility can make spill response operations extremely difficult or totally ineffective. In light of this, and in the wake of the disastrous impacts of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, we believe that the expansion of offshore development in the Arctic is not a responsible course to protect arctic wildlife and the people who depend on those resources. We urge the UK to support the call for all Arctic governments not to grant any further oil leases or permits in Arctic waters until response capabilities improve to ensure adequate clean-up of an oil spill.

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- Environmental Investigation Agency
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- The Mammal Society
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- World Society for the Protection of Animals

### **7. Welfare issues**

We ask the UK to express concern about the elimination of the meeting of the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods in 2010 and firmly request that it is reinstated for 2011.

If the Management and Compliance Committee is established, we urge the UK to insist and ensure that the Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Associated Welfare Issues is simultaneously included as one of its subsidiary bodies from the start.

We encourage the UK to propose an IWC welfare and ethics workshop to be held prior to IWC63.

Concern should be raised about the five harpoons and two hours that it took to kill a bowhead in Greenland this year. It should be questioned whether a 50mm grenade is adequate to humanely kill a whale of this size. Did the five harpoons detonate? Commitment from Greenland should be sought to ensure that the equipment used to hunt these larger whales is adequate.

#### **8. Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling**

Greenland's proposal for 10 humpbacks, and Russia's request for 5 extra gray whales, should be rejected whatever the outcome of the discussion on the Chair/Vice Chair's Proposal. A separate vote should not be taken on the proposal as Denmark and the Russian Federation did not submit a separate proposal in accordance with Rule of Procedure J1.

