

Future IWC work on cetacean conservation issues, including budgetary implications

(Submitted by Belgium, France and Italy)

Background

When the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) was adopted in 1946, the only significant human-induced threat to great whales was that from commercial whaling. Today, the range of threats facing the great whales, and cetaceans in general, is much broader than the founders of the IWC envisaged. Cetaceans are threatened by entanglement in fishing gear, collisions with shipping, accumulation of contaminants, degradation of key habitats, and, in the near future, may be further threatened by the ecological changes associated with climate change.

A key objective of the ICRW is to conserve whales for future generations. It is now generally accepted that the management of whaling is just one aspect of this mission. The IWC must continue to update its focus and mode of operation so as to address successfully the new challenges. This development process has been ongoing for several years, and is reflected in the preamble to Resolution 2003-1¹, adopted in Berlin, which notes that the Commission has evolved into an organisation internationally recognised for its contributions to the conservation of great whales.

All institutions, including international treaties and organisations, have to adapt to changing times and the changing demands of today's world. For example, when the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) started operations in 1959, the protection of the marine environment was only a minor concern, but has since developed into one of the main activity areas of the organisation, following the establishment in 1973 of its Marine Environmental Protection Committee. In addition to the conclusion of subsidiary conventions and protocols, a large fraction of recent IMO resolutions and decisions relate to environmental issues.

The IWC is no exception. As the IWC modernises itself, and adjusts its focus to addressing the main cetacean conservation issues of the 21st century, the IWC's administrative and budgetary priorities will need to contribute to strengthening the conservation pillar of the organisation. The establishment of the Conservation Committee in 2003 reflected a growing awareness of the need for the Commission to broaden its activities. The Conservation Agenda² adopted by the Committee in 2005 covers the main conservation issues affecting cetaceans. Its two currently ongoing projects are: (i) ship strikes; and (ii) investigation of inedible "stinky" gray whales. The work plan proposed by the Ship Strikes Working Group (IWC/59/CC3) includes five elements, all of which were endorsed by the Committee in Anchorage. One element is the establishment and maintenance of the ship strikes database, using the structure recommended by the Scientific Committee. Additional proposals agreed at the 2007 meeting of the Conservation Committee relate to the management of whale-watching and the conservation of the Eastern South Pacific right whale population.

While the gray whale project is being taken care of by the range states, the ship strikes project is global in scope, and will require support from the Commission and its members to develop as planned. Voluntary financial contributions have already been received from Austria and Australia and a pledge has been made by Italy, but in order to ensure the continuity of this and other projects, funding from the Commission will be needed.

It is important to distinguish between the funding for scientific research and for Conservation Committee projects. While the Scientific Committee advises on the nature and extent of threats to cetaceans, the Conservation Committee's role is to facilitate the required action on these threats. While the current arrangements for the funding of scientific research by the IWC appear to be functioning satisfactorily, comparable arrangements are needed to ensure that the conservation agenda is funded.

Issues and opportunities

1. Political issues

The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Conservation Committee have been an obstacle to the participation of some countries and, as a consequence, to structural financing of conservation work. The adoption of

¹ The Berlin Initiative on strengthening the conservation agenda of the International Whaling Commission.

² See doc. IWC/57/CC7 and IWC 57th Annual Report, Annex H.

agreed terms of reference may be the best way to overcome this. The Commission Chair has undertaken to address interessionally the remaining political problem caused by the non-consensual establishment of the Conservation Committee and to report back to the 60th Annual Meeting (Chair's Report of the 59th Annual Meeting, section 16.2).

2. Budgetary issues

We accept that reforms to the Commission's budget should in the first instance be within the constraints of the overall budget, such that members' statutory contributions need not be increased.

The IWC budget breakdown for the latest year for which figures are available (2005-2006) is given in Table 1. A limitation of these figures is that the Secretariat costs, which make up over half the total budget, are not broken down to reflect the Secretariat's contribution to the different areas of activity. For example, the actual expenditures on scientific research, publications and annual meetings would likely be considerably higher than the nominal figures, when the contribution of the Secretariat in terms of staff time and facilities is factored in. At some stage it will become necessary to allocate the Secretariat budget (at least approximately) to the various activity areas, such as: core administrative services; membership services; servicing of committees; organisation of meetings; publications; public relations; scientific projects; and conservation projects.

As discussed at the Heathrow intersessional, there is a strong case for reducing the frequency of Commission meetings (which currently account for 20% of the annual budget, not including Secretariat time and facilities); this could free up further resources that could be used for implementation purposes scientific work and implementation purposes (although some would need to be used to replenish the reserves and for additional working languages if adopted).

The resources required for the Commission's conservation projects include both scientific and implementation-related activities. In the case of the ship strikes project, the Scientific Committee's sub-committee on bycatch and other human-induced mortality has been providing the required input, while the Ship Strikes Working Group of the Conservation Committee has been working on the implementation issues.

With regard to the scientific component, we believe that the current procedure for the scientific budget, whereby the Scientific Committee makes an initial recommendation, which is then reviewed by the F&A Committee and approved by the Commission, has worked well, and should be retained. However, it is important the scientific needs of the Commission's conservation agenda be adequately recognised in drawing up the scientific budget.

In an analogous way, a budget recommendation for the implementation component should be developed by the Conservation Committee for consideration by the F&A Committee. An initial budget proposal could be drawn up on a provisional basis at the 2008 meeting of the Conservation Committee, pending Commission approval. We are open-minded as to whether a separate voluntary fund for conservation projects is established or funds are earmarked within the existing funds (see document IWC/56/12³).

Proposed way forward

In the framework of the upcoming discussions on the future of IWC, we propose the following steps to be considered by the Commission at its 60th Annual Meeting in Santiago, Chile:

- (1) The budget of the Commission should be adjusted to provide sufficient funds for the conservation projects recommended by the Conservation Committee and approved by the Commission, within the constraints of the overall budget; to assist in budgeting, the Commission's accounts should be re-tabulated to better reflect the actual expenditure on each activity area including the costs of secretariat involvement;
- (2) Budgeting for scientific projects related to the conservation agenda should continue to be based on the Scientific Committee's recommendations, but steps taken to ensure that the scientific needs of the Commission's Conservation Agenda are met;
- (3) At each meeting, the Conservation Committee should put forward a recommended work plan; this should be a regular item on its agenda. The Secretariat should include the required resources, to the extent possible, in its overall budget proposal.

³ "Funding considerations in relation to the Conservation Committee": document IWC/56/12 (submitted by the Secretariat).

Table 1. Commission expenditures for year ended 31.08.2006¹

	in GBP			as % of total budget		
	Total exp.	Income ²	Core exp.	Total exp.	Income	Core exp.
Secretariat	957 007		957 007	57.8		57.8
Publications	28 071	19 435	8 636	1.7	1.2	0.5
Annual Meetings	326 000	45 276	280 724	19.7	2.7	16.9
Other meetings	18 643		18 643	1.1		1.1
Scientific research	320 569	42 893	277 676	19.3	2.6	16.8
Miscellaneous	6 501		6 501	0.4		0.4
Total	1 656 791		1 549 187	100.0	6.5	93.5

¹Annual Report of the IWC 2006, p.164.

²Sales, observer fees, voluntary contributions