

## **Latin American NGO's Declaration 60th International Whaling Commission**

First we would like to thank the government of Chile for organizing the 60th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) here in Santiago, Chile.

Regarding the words of the Minister of Foreign Relations of Chile, Mr. Alejandro Foxley, in the first session of the plenary - regarding the role of civil society asking the IWC to strengthen the participation and space for us, as well as scientists from developing countries - we request that this be translated into concrete actions in all aspects of the IWC.

We are going through a unique moment in the Commission: where the modernization of this organism is being discussed and for the first time, civil society is being asked to express their position during the plenary meeting.

Today we are here as non governmental organizations from Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. The fact that the annual meeting of the IWC is being held in Chile has facilitated the important participation of Latin-Americans so we are able to defend our right to non lethal use of whales. It is our desire that the IWC finally reflects what the real world expects about the adequate management and conservation of cetaceans.

For that we would like to point out the following:

### **About Public Participation:**

From the vision of civil organizations it is difficult to conceive the modernization of the IWC without first considering going forward in the challenge that represents overcoming their restrictive practices in public participation, as well as the need of transparency in the rules of procedure.

Incorporating the views and proposals of organized civil society, allowing the IWC to integrate the best practices adopted by the majority of multilateral organizations at a global level.

For that, we propose that the Commission constitutes a working group, composed by commissioners and NGO representatives that develops the proposals of necessary changes to the rules of procedure and opens the possibility of public participation in the IWC.

### **About Transparency**

In 2001, the IWC adopted an important resolution in this matter. For one part, reaffirming the 10<sup>th</sup> Principle of the Rio Declaration, which asked the member states “to facilitate and promote the conscience participation by making available public information”. At the same time the resolution emphasizes the importance of “adhering to the requisitions of good faith and transparency in all the activities done by the IWC” firmly supporting, the principle of complete independence and sovereignty of the member states to decide their policies, and participate freely in the IWC, without the unnecessary interference and the pressure of economic measures of other states. We are convinced that it is urgently necessary to implement the proposal, as one of the fundamental needs to go forward for a real modernization of the IWC.

### **About Sanctuaries and Non Lethal Use**

For our region, the growing development of the industry of responsible and high quality whale watching is of great importance because of its social, cultural, environmental, educational and economic benefits. Even more, these benefits contribute directly to the qualitative and sustainable development of our coastal communities, for which the non lethal use and conservation of cetaceans represents the legitimate demands of Latin American citizens.

For those reasons, the creation of Sanctuaries, in particular the South Atlantic Sanctuary and the elimination of whaling operations in the Southern Hemisphere, where 80% of the world’s whales live, will protect the interests of our region and conserve large cetaceans, as migratory species and a shared resource of our nations that have opted for their non lethal use.

According to the report of the state of whale watching in Latin America, our region has demonstrated a strong and constant expansion since 1998, increasing from 56 communities in 8 countries to 91 communities in 18 countries in 2008, and an annual average growth of 11.3% which comes to more than 270 million dollars.

It is then clear that the interests of our region are related to the non lethal use and development of conservation strategies for cetaceans and their habitats, for which we expect the Commission advances to the recognition of our inalienable right to the non lethal use of whales.

Thank you, Mr. President.