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Media Release

Countries must oppose attempts to take the International Whaling Commission back to the days of unsustainable whaling operations

10 September 2018, Florianopolis, Brazil: Participants from about 66 countries will meet in Florianopolis, Brazil this week to make decisions on issues that could significantly impact the future of whales, whaling, and the direction of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

Deliberations over the next five days are expected to define the Commission's ability to regulate the conservation and management of whales and other marine cetacean populations.

The most controversial issue on the table is Japan's proposal to establish a Sustainable Whaling Committee, which would allow countries to establish whaling quotas by a simple majority vote. Together with Greenpeace and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), WWF urges member states to strongly oppose the draft resolution ironically dubbed the 'way forward.'

"Japan's 'way forward' proposal is procedurally unsound and would take the International Whaling Commission back to the days when it presided over unsustainable whaling operations," says Leigh Henry, Director, Wildlife Policy, WWF-US.

Another draft resolution which could become a contentious issue during negotiations is the proposal on Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. The draft text proposes significant changes to the Commission's working practices including offering countries the possibility to automatically extend quotas every six years without an affirmative decision by the IWC, approving renewals on the basis of scientific advice alone.

"WWF recognizes the need for aboriginal subsistence whaling where it is carried out for local consumption, but countries should not bypass the Commission, weakening the IWC and the impact it can help create," said Aimee Leslie, WWF Global Cetacean Bycatch Lead.

In addition to these issues, the IWC meeting will also discuss a raft of other topics, including a proposal to create a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary, as well as resolutions on ghost gear entanglement, ocean noise and cetaceans and ecosystem services.

'The Florianópolis Declaration' presented by the Brazil seeks to ensure the recovery and the maintenance of whale species and populations to protect and respect the critical roles they play in global ocean ecosystems. The draft resolution states that commercial whaling is no longer a necessary economic activity; and that "scientific whaling" is not currently a valid alternative to answer scientific questions.

Note for editors:



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