

International Whaling

(International Whaling Commission, 2011)

1964

63rd Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
Jersey, Channel Islands

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Opening Statement by New Zealand

The New Zealand Government wishes to thank the Government of the States of Jersey for hosting the 63rd annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission.

New Zealanders care passionately about whales.

New Zealand's position on whaling is well known and has not changed:

- We are strong supporters of the moratorium on commercial whaling.
- We oppose special permit or "scientific" whaling.
- We believe modern science techniques can increase our understanding of whales without killing them.
- We are particularly opposed to "scientific whaling" in the Southern Ocean – an area of the world that holds special significance for New Zealanders.
- We are long-standing supporters of all whale sanctuaries and believe that they must be respected by all International Whaling Commission members. We support the establishment of a South Atlantic Whales Sanctuary.
- We are opposed to whaling under objection and under reservation.
- We support restricting international trade of whale meat. We are very concerned at the resumption of trade between Iceland, Norway and Japan, and take particular exception to the trade in endangered fin whales.
- We welcome the contribution NGOs can make to the work of multilateral agencies, support increased participation by NGOs and seek greater transparency in the management and work of the International Whaling Commission.
- We firmly believe that the International Whaling Commission must modernise itself and pursue an agenda that ensures the proper conservation and management of all cetaceans.

For more than twenty years, the fundamental purpose of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling has been in dispute by its membership.

In 2007, the International Whaling Commission membership decided to start a diplomatic initiative to resolve the impasse. At this time, there was recognition that the divisions within the membership were deep and the capacity to bridge them seemed not to exist.

New Zealand was steadfastly committed to this process, which sought to address the future of the organisation. We valued the opportunity to identify core issues of importance to the International Whaling Commission members. We saw the opportunity to construct an environment where bridges could be built, in order to transform the IWC into an effective organisation for whales conservation.

The process on the future of the IWC developed useful suggestions for reform. Common ground was found around some issues and all members saw the need for modernising the International Whaling Commission.

At IWC62, the membership demonstrated that a positive and constructive atmosphere had been achieved. But it did not reach consensus. Instead, a 12 month period of reflection was agreed. While we remain firmly committed to the reform process, we sense that the majority of Commission members want this period of reflection to be continued. We are happy to go along with this on the understanding that reflection does not mean inaction.

Against this background, at IWC63 New Zealand's objective is to seek to maintain progress achieved so far.

We would encourage dialogue amongst members.

We seek to continue to build trust.

We look to encourage Contracting Governments to continue to cooperate in taking forward the work of the Commission, notwithstanding their different views regarding the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.

Longer term, we believe it is important to continue to keep before us our objective – effective whales conservation and management – and address together the impediments to our achieving this.

