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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: 66th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
(Portorož, Slovenia, 24-28 October 2016)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the outcome of the abovementioned meeting to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 19 December 2016.

**66th Meeting of the International Whaling Commission
(Portorož, Slovenia, 24-28 October 2016)**

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) met in Portorož, Slovenia, 24-28 October 2016. This year marked the 70th anniversary of the signing of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) and the 30th anniversary of the start of the moratorium on commercial whaling.

The IWC adopted two Resolutions by consensus:

- the first one aimed at **improving the effectiveness of IWC through a comprehensive independent review** of the IWC's institutional and governance arrangements; and
- the second one, co-sponsored by the EU Member States Contracting Parties to the Convention, was submitted as a matter of urgency during the IWC meeting to address **the critical situation of the vaquita dolphin faced with imminent extinction** (less than 59 animals still alive).

IWC 66 also adopted four Resolutions by majority vote:

- on the **review process for whaling under special permits** i.e. so-called scientific whaling. The resolution clarifies the calendar and process for the examination of scientific permits by the IWC and puts in place an additional step in the process aimed at better preparing the debate at IWC itself;
- on the **Minamata Convention**, which calls for increased cooperation on monitoring mercury levels in cetaceans;
- on **cetaceans and their contribution to ecosystem functioning** which calls for reviewing the contributions made by live cetaceans to ecosystems functioning to people and natural systems as well as for increased cooperation on these issues; and

- on the **participation of "governments of limited means"** that create a "Voluntary Assistance Fund" to facilitate the full participation of "governments of limited means" in the work of the IWC.

The EU Member States parties to the Convention supported the first three resolutions and abstained on the last one.

An unconvincing draft Resolution on **food security** was withdrawn since only a few parties supported the attempt to link depletion of fish stocks to migrating whales.

Despite the support of EU Member States Parties to the ICRW, the required 3/4 majority for adopting the proposal for the creation of a **South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary**, submitted by Argentina, Brazil, Gabon, South Africa and Uruguay, was not reached. Brazil announced its intention to continue working towards its adoption at the next IWC meeting in Brazil in 2018.

As regards **Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW)**, the IWC welcomed after intense discussion the use of a pilot timeline and process for consideration of catch/strike limit requests. It also submitted the Maniitsoq expert workshop report to the ASW Working Group for further consideration and recommendation, as appropriate, to the next IWC meeting.

In reference to a paper on **Small Type Coastal Whaling** tabled by Japan, the EU Member States Contracting Parties to the IWC reiterated the already agreed position that this type of whaling should be considered as commercial whaling and would therefore be a breach of the existing moratorium on commercial whaling.

Regarding **nominations**, Mr Joji Morishita (Commissioner for Japan) was elected new Chair of the IWC and the EU candidate, Mr Andrej Bibic (Commissioner for Slovenia), was elected to succeed Mr Morishita as IWC Vice-Chair.

The Commission represented the European Union which is an observer in the IWC. It was together with the EU Member States very active in plenary discussions as well as in drafting groups, ensuring improvement of the various texts in line with the agreed coordinated position.

The Presidency team was composed of officials from Slovakia and the Netherlands. At the request of Slovakia, the Netherlands presented the position of the EU Member States Contracting Parties to the Convention, in line with both the Council Decision of 2011 (which established the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU at the IWC meeting) and the subsequent technical positions on most agenda items established in the relevant Council Working Party (WPIEI) and adjusted as necessary through coordination on the spot during the meeting.
