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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 12 October 2026 70th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC70) (Hobart, Australia, 28 September - 2 October 2026) – Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The International Whaling Commission held its 70th biennial meeting (IWC70) from 28 September to 2 October 2026 in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. Twenty EU Member States were represented at the meeting (Greece, Latvia and Malta are not Parties; Estonia, Finland, Luxembourg and Romania were absent). In total 65 contracting governments (out of a total of 89) were present, with 61 entitled to vote.

As with previous meetings, IWC70 continued to be clearly divided along pro-conservation and pro-sustainable use lines.

Quorum: Following on from IWC69 the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WGOE) spent the intersessional period examining the matter and proposed 2 options for consideration by the commission.

Both options set quorum based on the attendance by a majority of the members of the Commission. Option 1 further added that presence in the room by a majority of the members of the Commission at the start of each plenary session shall constitute a quorum for that session. Option 2 stated that presence in the room at the beginning of each plenary session of the majority of the members of the Commission having delegations at the meeting shall constitute a quorum.

The EU position had been discussed at WPIEI before arrival in Hobart, and support for option 1 was agreed. Option 2 was considered unfair as it could potentially lead to a situation where a contracting government is disenfranchised simply by not attending a physical meeting.

There was no consensus on either proposal although option 1 seemed to have stronger support. As a result, the chair charged a small drafting group to carry out further work on option 1, with some elements of item 2, for consideration at IWC71. Ireland will continue to represent the EU on this drafting group.

Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW): The automatic process of renewal agreed at IWC69 was applied successfully.

The report outlined the intersessional consideration of whether the term “aboriginal” should continue to be used within the IWC. Views differed among ASW countries. Greenland and Denmark argued that “indigenous” would better reflect contemporary international terminology, while the United States and others expressed concern that changing terminology could require extensive revisions to existing IWC decisions, documents and management arrangements and potentially reopen debates that had taken many years to resolve. While recognising that the term “aboriginal” is viewed by some as outdated, participants also acknowledged the practical implications of any change.

In light of these differing views, the Sub-Committee concluded that there was insufficient consensus to recommend a change at this time. It therefore recommended that the term “aboriginal” continue to be used within the IWC framework while encouraging ASW hunters, communities and governments to continue discussions and revisit the issue in the future if they so wished.

South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary (SAWS): A proposal to establish the SAWS, led by Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay was once again tabbed for a vote. Proponents argued it would protect cetaceans in the South Atlantic, while opponents questioned its scientific basis and saw it as a shift from the IWC's original mandate. This proposal was put to a vote and was (once again) defeated – by 4 votes. Despite this setback, the proponents stated that it is their intention to reintroduce this proposal at every meeting, until such time as it passes.

Resolutions:

- The Hobart Declaration on the Eightieth Anniversary of the Signing of the International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling, 1946. This declaration was adopted by consensus;
- The EU proposed Resolution on the *Global Trade in Fish Maw and Incidental Catches of Threatened Cetaceans* was adopted by vote;
- The EU proposed resolution on *Vessel Strikes* was adopted by vote;
- The EU cosponsored (with the UK) proposed resolution on *Cetacean Strandings* as a Cross-Cutting Priority of the IWC, was adopted by consensus;
- The proposed resolution on *Small Cetacean Directed Takes Linked to Commercial Fisheries*, and the proposed resolution on the *Implementation of a Conservation and Management Program for Whale Stocks aimed towards the Sustainable Use of Whale Resources* were withdrawn.

Budget: Budget discussions highlighted the IWC's ongoing financial difficulties. A revised biennial budget was proposed with a 3% increase in member contributions for 2027 and 2028, down from an initially proposed 6%. This lower increase will mean cuts in areas like digital upgrades and IWC Secretariat travel. An 11th hour amendment to reduce the % increase to zero was not accepted by the chair. As no consensus could be achieved, the budget was ultimately adopted by vote.

Election of officials

Belgium has stepped down from the IWC Bureau, and that seat will be taken by Australia. Other roles were filled, including vice chair of ASW (US), vice chair of the conservation committee (South Africa), and member of the Budget Subcommittee (US).

Looking Forward to IWC71

IWC71 is scheduled for September/October 2028. No location has been identified yet although South Africa and Kenya have indicated interest. It will be chaired by Dr Urbain Brito (Benin), who has served as vice chair for the intersessionary period 2024 -2026. Ms Anne-Marie Svoboda (Netherlands) was elected Vice-Chair.
