

**NORWEGIAN DELEGATION TO
THE 53rd ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE IWC**

IWC/53/OS Norway

London, 23 July 2001.

OPENING STATEMENT

It is a pleasure to express our appreciation to the Government of the United Kingdom for hosting this 53rd Annual Meeting of the IWC and for providing us with such convenient facilities here in London.

Norway's position on the various issues to be discussed is well known. It should nevertheless be recalled that our overall policy objective is to work towards making the IWC function in accordance with the principles and objectives laid down in the 1946 International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW). The basic fact remains that the IWC was established in terms of the ICRW, which governs the Commission's work, directed towards fulfilling the twin goals of (1) protecting whale stocks against over-exploitation, and (2) provide for the orderly development of the whaling industry. Indeed, the setting-up of the IWC was the forerunner of the grand regime structures of binding international cooperation on environment conservation and resource management that have subsequently evolved. These regimes include such mechanisms as the 1973 CITES Convention, the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention, the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Since the World Summit in Rio in 1992 the twin principles and objectives of conservation and sustainable use of Nature's resources, and the use of the ecosystem approach in Nature management, have been firmly developed and understood as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

It is within this context that we must consider the performance of the IWC. Regrettably, the IWC finds itself painfully out of step with the otherwise universally accepted principles now embodied in the newest resource management agreements, as well as out of step with its own founding principles and objectives. Instead of serving its purpose of being an organization to provide for the *management* of whaling activities, it has turned into an instrument for activists seeking to *prohibit* whaling, as a matter of principle!

We see the grave danger that undermining the principle and objective of sustainable use in the IWC, will serve to undermine that principle and objective within the whole international cooperation structure, thereby threatening the very credibility of this still vulnerable regime structure. For Norway – as for the rest of the world – this is an issue far 'bigger than whales'. This is also why Norway, while striving for the implementation of the ICRW and the normalization of whaling activities, attaches such importance to the development of otherwise accepted management principles in the IWC.

A widespread belief holds that the IWC in 1982 introduced a *ban* on commercial whaling. In fact the Commission adopted, with effect from 1986, a temporary *moratorium* consisting of two components, viz. (1) setting catch quotas at zero for the large species of whales, and (2) a commitment that by 1990, *at the latest*, the IWC would "undertake a comprehensive assessment of the effects of this decision on whale stocks and consider modification of this provision and the establishment of other catch limits" (IWC *Schedule*, para 10(e)). This part of the decision has, however, been subsequently ignored by the Commission and has not yet been implemented.

Exercising our rights in terms of our objection lodged against the 1982 moratorium decision, Norway has been its most consistent opponent. Norway has, however, also been the country that has most loyally and systematically abided by that decision, indeed the only country that has actually implemented its provisions in full by adopting – as envisaged and prescribed by *Schedule* para 10(e) – the Revised Management Procedure (RMP) recommended by the IWC's own Scientific Committee (and indeed endorsed in principle by the Commission itself) as the basis for setting catch quotas.

Our commitment to the IWC is strong and durable. From the very beginning – dating back to 1946 – Norway has played an active role in making the IWC an effective and credible instrument for responsible international cooperation on the conservation and management of whales. While exercising our rights under the 1946 Convention and its *Schedule* regulations, we have not only conscientiously adhered to the Commission's rules and principles, but also consistently strived to assist the IWC itself in doing so. To this end, we have always been ready to cooperate in good faith with other IWC Member States in order to seek acceptable solutions to the problems which the Commission has brought upon itself.

Thus, we have always been ready to do our utmost to contribute constructively and substantively to working towards a solution that would bring the IWC out of its current deadlock and facilitate real progress in the task of restoring the Commission's credibility as a responsible and serious management body. In today's situation, this means that our main efforts are directed towards fulfilling the main task that is the priority item of this 53rd Annual Meeting – namely, as laid down in Res. 2000–3 from last year's Adelaide meeting – to ensure that "the process of completion of the RMS proceed expeditiously". Contracting Parties should now work together in good faith towards fulfilling this important task, and refrain from letting our work be obstructed or derailed by complicating the process by the demands for excessive observation schemes or by adding alien elements – such as additional requirements concerning killing methods, DNA testing and registers, monitoring of trade, animal welfare and environment considerations – to obstruct the adoption of the RMS. Nor should the Commission's valuable time be diverted to other non–priority items, such as discussions of the alleged merits of establishing sanctuaries.

Another important task for the IWC is to ensure that the comprehensive assessment programme, developed by the IWC Scientific Committee and approved by the Commission itself, is implemented unobstructedly. This programme also includes sighting surveys to be carried out in relevant waters, including EEZs of Member States. Cooperation between Member States to facilitate such survey operations is a necessary element in this respect. It should be recalled that such cooperation is also an obligation in terms of Article 65 of the 1982 UN Law of the Sea Convention.

The IWC is an open organization which is strengthened by the entry of new Member States, which certainly will make a valuable contribution to the task of fulfilling the objectives of the ICRW. Norway welcomes these countries' adherence to the Convention and is pleased to see them assume their rightful place as Member States of the IWC, exercising their full rights in this capacity.

Norway strongly supports the global effort to achieve a sustainable development. We do also agree with the general scientific community understanding that the objectives of conservation, sustainable use and sharing of benefits arising out of such use of biological resources, have to

be mutually achieved. There must be something in it for people on the ground, and at sea. Although some countries have openly admitted that they will never accept sustainable use of any stock of any species of whales as a matter of principle, Norway is still hopeful and optimistic that the IWC will decide to join this effort.