



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

The Red House
135 Station Road
Impington, Cambridge
CB24 9NP, UK

t. +44 (0) 1223 233971
e. secretariat@iwc.int
www.iwc.int

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13 February 2019

Under Secretary General Soares
United Nations
New York
NY 10017
USA

Dear Under-Secretary-General Soares,

On behalf of the International Whaling Commission, thank you for your letter of 28 December 2018 regarding the May 2019 meeting of the Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks Agreement. As noted in your correspondence, the focus of the session will be the topic of 'Performance reviews of regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements'.

The IWC is a member of the Regional Secretariats' Network (RSN) hosted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. The Secretariat attended the RSN 2018 meetings as well as the FAO COFI meetings in July 2019. At those RSN meetings, and in a lunch time event during COFI, the IWC provided presentations and background information on its Bycatch Mitigation Initiative. Incidental bycatch and entanglement in fishing gear is the leading direct cause of mortality of cetaceans, with an estimated 300,000 killed each year. In some cases, bycatch is having population-level impacts leading to stock decline or even extinction, such as with the vaquita in the Gulf of California. The IWC is therefore grateful that the 2018 FAO COFI meeting agreed to take steps to prepare guidelines for addressing marine mammal bycatch in fisheries.

It is primarily fishery managers who can directly impact marine mammal bycatch through monitoring and mitigation. The IWC is keen to provide the scientific and technical information that will inform and incite those who are mandated to manage fisheries to implement effective actions. In addition to national measures to monitor and mitigate bycatch, some RFMOs have agreed to recommendations or resolutions that address marine mammal bycatch in the fisheries on their shared stocks. The May 2016 UN Review Conference on the Agreement for Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish stocks and Highly Migratory Species refers to the need for RFMOs/Agreements to address bycatch management and discards, and to strengthen and enhance cooperation and coordination among RFMOs/As, particularly with respect to bycatch.

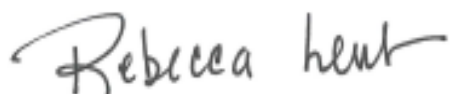
With this in mind, we note that some RFMOs have included in their performance reviews an assessment of the effectiveness of measures in place to address marine mammal bycatch and look forward to seeing this undertaken for future reviews. This review, which is consistent with an ecosystem approach to fisheries, could allow a cross-RFMO comparison of the measures in place for monitoring and mitigating such bycatch, and an opportunity for the RFMOs, through RSN for example, to compare and contrast the effectiveness of these measures.

Chair: Andrej Bibic (Slovenia)
Vice-Chair: Amadou Télivel Diallo (Republic of Guinea)
Executive Secretary: Rebecca Lent

Finally, I can inform you that the IWC has recently undergone an independent review by an Expert Panel, as part of a governance review. The [report](#) was finalized in April 2018 and is available on our website. At the September 2018 Biennial meeting of the Commission, it was agreed that the report would be the basis of an implementation plan for institutional and governance reform. The IWC will share the outcomes of this two-year process with the relevant UN bodies as these become available.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this background information, which we hope will contribute to a successful meeting of the States Parties to the Agreement.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Lent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Rebecca Lent
Executive Secretary