

International Whaling Commission – 61st Annual Meeting
Funchal, Madeira, Portugal
June 2009

Opening Statement by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama,
Peru and Uruguay

We would like to express our great appreciation to the National Government of Portugal and the Regional Government of Madeira, especially to the people of this beautiful Island, for hosting the 61st Meeting of the International Whaling Commission and for making all necessary efforts to facilitate our work.

We appreciate and recognize the important role played by our Chair, Dr. Bill Hogarth, in the discussions on the future of the IWC. We also appreciate the strenuous efforts by Dr. Hogarth and the SWG Chair, Ambassador de Soto, in trying to develop a set of options with a view to move the IWC forward. We reaffirm our full support to the ongoing discussions on the future of the Commission.

Although the SWG has fallen short of developing a “package or packages” to solve the impasse faced by the Commission, we believe that this process has resulted in very important and concrete progress. We have improved the atmosphere and spirit of the discussions, and dialogue has taken place in an open and respectful manner. As the Chair has stated, we have been successful in identifying, categorizing and narrowing down the issues that all member countries have identified as important to the future of the IWC.

During the work of the SWG, member countries were able to advance in the consideration of some of the most controversial issues we currently face. However, we feel that much work still has to be done with regard to the very difficult matter of scientific whaling. Without a solution to this issue, we believe that it will not be possible to have a final agreement on the future of the IWC.

We reiterate that the non-lethal use of whales and the establishment of a South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary, as well as the respect for existing sanctuaries, are issues of utmost importance to our countries and, therefore, should also be adequately contemplated in any package. An agreement on the future of the IWC should also allow for the development of a responsible and active participation of civil society inside the Commission.

We believe that it is important to maintain a positive atmosphere for discussions in the following intersessional period of the Commission. In this sense, we are of the view that countries should refrain from taking unilateral actions that could jeopardize the negotiating process, such as the resumption of the international trade of whale products and the further increase of catch quotas.

Our countries are strongly committed to this process, having invested much time and resources in its successful development. We reiterate our willingness to continue to work with all Parties in finding a consensus agreement that ensures the conservation of whale species for future generations.