

Annex G

Extinction Initiative – Next Steps

Members: Simmonds, Cipriano, Hines, Jimenez, Minton, Porter, Rojas-Bracho, Stimmelmayer, Zerbini.

RATIONALE

The Extinction Initiative (EI) grew out of what is arguably the key mission of the IWC, namely, to prevent the extinction or local extirpation of cetacean species or populations.

Since our last meeting, a new dedicated webpage has been added to the IWC site in support of the initiative: <https://iwc.int/management-and-conservation/cetaceans-and-extinction>. (Many thanks to the Secretariat for their great work on this.)

The next step is to provide the IWC, the globally recognized intergovernmental body for cetacean research, conservation and management, with a mechanism to express its concern in a timely manner to the broader public about such impending or newly documented events.

This is to be achieved by developing and completing statements using pre-agreed templates for species or populations of concern. This would represent a significant contribution to the IWC's communication and outreach efforts.

MECHANISM

The Commission is requested to endorse the statement template and permit the Scientific Committee (SC) to issue statements of concern intersessionally (i.e. between Commission meetings) related to one of two circumstances.

- (i) A cetacean species or distinct population is possibly extinct or has gone extinct.
- (ii) There is a sudden grave concern about the survival of a cetacean species or distinct population.

These statements will not stray from the pre-agreed template. They will be based on best scientific knowledge and will either be generated at a SC meeting or, if the timing of the precipitating incident precludes this, by a group of appropriate experts appointed by the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the SC and the Conservation Committee (CC). The statement will be published on the IWC website and brought to the attention of the media.

The template for the statement is provided in Appendix 1 and the relevant section from last year's SC report is given in Appendix 2.

The IWC Bureau (which is not a decision-making body) would be notified before any such statement is issued, and a report would be provided to the Commission when it next meets.

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EXTINCTION INITIATIVE WORKING GROUP

To support the request for authorization to further develop and use the extinction/extirpation statement template, the Extinction Initiative Working Group will, before IWC69, craft an example of a completed 'sample' for the franciscana.

Appendix 1

EXTINCTION INITIATIVE: OUTLINE TEMPLATE FOR A FORMAL STATEMENT BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Please note: this is a skeleton template, providing a structure for a statement but not the specific content which would need to be tailored. The template covers three scenarios: (a) an extinction; (b) an extirpation; and (c) an expression of serious concern. Some paragraphs are generic and apply to all three scenarios – Some paragraphs would be tailored (a) (b) or (c) depending on which scenario is applicable.

Image 1: photograph or illustration of species

Title (a) Extinction of [common name (genus species)]

Title (b) Disappearance from XX region of XX species

Title (c) Serious concern of extinction or local extirpation raised: XX species (in XX region)

Opener (a) The International Whaling Commission today reports on the extinction of XXX species.

Opener (b) The International Whaling Commission today reports that XX species is assessed to have disappeared from XX region. Whilst populations still exist in other parts of [the world] this is grave news for the species as a whole.

Opener (c) The International Whaling Commission today warns that extinction or local extirpation is an imminent risk for XX and sets out the actions needed now to prevent this.

Generic Para 1:

IWC assessment is based on [quote taken from IUCN Red List or equivalent authoritative source: status, dates and link to relevant page]

Generic Para 2:

Historical numbers (dates, references)

Trend of decline over time

Epoch/time of extinction

Image 2: distribution map or illustration

Generic Para 3:

Major threats/impacts responsible for decline/extinction: [entanglement in fishing gear/ship strikes/pollution/habitat degradation/directed takes/combination/other]

Generic Para 4:

Successful and unsuccessful management efforts made including by IWC [alternative fishing gear/ rerouting of shipping lanes/protected area/capture for *ex-situ* conservation/combination/other]

Para 5 (a): Why this wasn't enough to prevent extinction and what lessons have been learned going forward.

Para 5 (b): Actions that must be taken now to prevent this extirpation, potentially leading to the extirpation of other populations and extinction of the species.

Para 5 (c): Actions that must be taken now before population size is so low that measures are too late to be effective including simple explanation of the biological background and bottleneck.

Generic Para 6:

The big picture: meaning/repercussions (ecological, societal) of extinction: various roles of the species/population as [predators/ecosystem engineers etc.; loss of biodiversity; loss for economy/tourism?]

Generic close:

Re-assessment of our relationship with our environment. There has never been a more appropriate time to take stock, learn lessons and do things differently in the future.

What actions can an individuals and/or stakeholder organisations take to make a difference?

Appendix 2

EXTRACT FROM THE RELEVANT PART OF LAST YEAR'S SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

ITEM 19. EXTINCTION INITIATIVE

19.1 Extinction Initiative Report

Michael Stachowitsch (Austria) presented an update on the Extinction Initiative. This initiative grew out of a suggestion at SC/68B that the Committee should be better prepared to address the potential extinction of a cetacean species, possibly by preparing in advance a template for a statement noting that such an event had occurred (IWC, 2021, p.96). The initiative was initially developed within the Small Cetacean sub-committee but was continued by an intersessional group including participants from other sub-committees, and has had extensive support from the Secretariat, including coordination of the effort by Kate Wilson.

This initiative was developed to address a key component of the IWC's mission – preventing cetacean extinction – and builds off momentum to identify species or populations of particular concern to better address potential extinction. The initiative provides a mechanism for the IWC to respond in a timely manner to an actual extinction of a cetacean species, to be proactive in highlighting pending extinctions, and it increases communication and outreach efforts.

In the following intersessional period, this initial extinction initiative was expanded to encompass two tasks: (1) to create a new IWC webpage on extinction and cetaceans; and (2) to develop templates for statements, to be issued by the IWC, warning that extinction of a species or extirpation of a local population seemed likely to happen in the near future, was also developed. The templates are intended to communicate news of an extinction to the public and perhaps raise support for measures to help avert such a catastrophe. The IWC website page has text focused more generally on the topic of extinctions and an explanation of the IWC's crucial role in addressing 21st century threats and preventing cetacean extinctions¹. The text in the extinction and extirpation templates, and the website, have been developed as communications tools to facilitate outreach and education, and do not commit the IWC to any specific actions. The IWC webpage on extinction and cetaceans went online on 3 March 2021 (UN World Wildlife Day).

Templates were developed for species of concern, divided into three extinction scenarios: actual extinction, serious concern of extinction raised, and disappearance from a region (extirpation). Draft versions to test these templates are being prepared for franciscana, vaquita, Hector's and Maui dolphins, and Rice's whale. This initiative was presented to and endorsed by the Conservation Committee in 2021, with the intention to proceed as a joint or parallel project, as the CC is already working on directly relevant issues.

The Scientific Committee recognized the Secretariat's excellent work on the website, and thanked Wilson and the Secretariat for putting it together, noting that it looks very professional and has added considerably to IWC's outreach efforts to the general public. The Committee also noted that public education as well as communication from the SC to the Commission is an important aspect of the Committee's work.

In discussion, it was noted that identifying and prioritizing vulnerable species and populations is a difficult task, that different fora with different objectives would likely come up with different lists, and that within the SC there are various similar or related efforts. The Abundance Estimates, Stock Status and International Cruises (ASI) sub-committee is developing a status of stocks list, starting with baleen whale stocks that are at risk and for which there are takes, and distinguishing between data-rich/data-poor species, as well as incorporating anthropogenic threats into their considerations; a website page with that list is also planned. IUCN publishes a list of the most endangered species (IUCN, 2021; see item 19.2, this report), and many Committee members contribute to that effort; the approach and criteria used for that effort do not necessarily overlap with IWC's in-depth assessments of species and stocks. The recently formed IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group adjunct, ICPC (item 16.2.1) is planning to hold a two-day workshop just before the upcoming Society for Marine Mammalogy biennial in Palm Beach, Florida, 13-17 December 2021, and one of the items planned for that workshop is initiation of such an extinction risk/priority ranking exercise.

It was noted that the discussion about this at SC/68C had also led to the development of an independent statement of concern signed by many SC members and others from more than 40 countries. This statement was made public in September 2020 and presented at the Conservation Committee². During discussion a concern regarding timing was expressed, since the next Commission meeting is not until 2022, meaning first statements of concern would not go out until 2023, which could be problematic if any concerns involve critically endangered species that require action before that time.

A proposal was made that any species of urgent concern so identified could be presented to the Commission at its special meeting in September 2021. Additional next steps require broader consensus and input from other areas of expertise, including outside of the IWC. These steps include identifying the most vulnerable species or populations, prioritizing the

¹<https://iwc.int/cetaceans-andextinction>.

²See 'The Real and Imminent Extinction Risk to Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises', <https://www.mammalresearchinstitute.science/whale-unit>.

taxa for which IWC statements should be prepared, and, in close cooperation with the Secretariat, recommending to the Commission that specific statements be made public. An intersessional steering group was created to advance this work. Members include: Cipriano, Cooke, Hines, Jiménez, (Sarah) Malette, Minton, Parsons, Porter, Rojas-Bracho, Scheidat, Simmonds, Torres-Flores, Trujillo, Slooten, Stachowitsch, Stimmelmayer and Zerbini. Simmonds agreed to act as Convenor. It was suggested that the Convenor of this steering group for the extinction initiative be added to the ASI small working group.

REFERENCES

International Whaling Commission. 2021. Report of the Scientific Committee. *J. Cetacean Res. Manage. (Suppl.)* 22: 1-222.

IUCN. 2021. *IUCN Red List of Endangered Species*.
