

## Lankanfinolhu (Maldives) Declaration

The International Whaling Commission, IWC, declared its Indian Ocean Sanctuary (IOS) in 1979. The IOS provides protection from commercial whaling for all large whales and orca. However, whales now face threats from other human activities in addition to whaling, for example pollution (including sound pollution), ship strikes and entanglements with fishing gear. Small cetaceans are not covered by the provisions of the IOS, but are also facing many threats, including by-catch, direct catches in fisheries and habitat degradation.

To mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IOS, the Indian Ocean Cetacean Symposium was convened in Maldives, 18-20 July 2009. Sixty delegates, from 15 government agencies, 13 NGOs, 6 IGOs and 11 academic institutions, travelled from 22 countries to participate in the symposium. Results of cetacean research carried out in 18 coastal countries (South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Mauritius, Madagascar, Comoros, France (Mayotte), Seychelles, Oman, Pakistan, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and Australia) and the high seas were presented at the symposium.

*Celebrating* the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Whaling Commission's Indian Ocean Sanctuary,

*Noting* the important role the IOS has had in stimulating cetacean conservation research in the region and in bringing together the participants from coastal states for this symposium,

*Recalling* the substantial and illegal catches of large whales taken from the Indian Ocean, especially during the 1960s,

*Recognizing* that more than two billion people live in countries bordering the Indian Ocean, many of whom depend upon its marine resources for their livelihoods and food security,

*Conscious* of the ecological role of cetaceans in ensuring healthy coastal and marine ecosystems,

*Valuing* the welfare and continued existence of cetaceans in the Indian Ocean,

*Concerned* by the declining health of Indian Ocean ecosystems and its impacts on all cetaceans, and in particular by the continued by-catch of small cetaceans in the fishing gears of many nations,

*Noting* the migratory nature of many cetaceans within the Indian Ocean,

*Mindful* of the growth of whale and dolphin watching within the Indian Ocean, and the increased opportunities it provides for employment, education and recreation in coastal communities,

*Cognizant* of the need for improved coordination, prioritisation and cooperation in efforts to improve conservation outcomes for all cetaceans throughout the Indian Ocean,

The participants in the Indian Ocean Cetacean Symposium,

*Congratulate* the International Whaling Commission on the formation and the continuation of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary;

*Recognize* the important role played by the Republic of Seychelles in the formation of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary;

*Call upon* the International Whaling Commission to ensure the continuation of the Indian Ocean Sanctuary in perpetuity;

*Stress* the importance of improved education and awareness at all levels of society for the conservation of cetaceans and the sustainable use of marine ecosystems;

*Encourage* all fishing nations that have by-catches and directed catches of Indian Ocean cetaceans to greatly increase efforts to determine the scale of these catches and to reduce them to the minimum level possible;

*Urge* all Indian Ocean coastal states to strengthen national legislation and compliance (and where necessary enact new laws) to protect all cetaceans and their habitats within their exclusive economic zones;

*Reiterate* the commitments made under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Compliance Agreements, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing, and the UN Highly Migratory and Straddling Stocks Agreement to conserve highly migratory species (a category which includes almost all cetaceans) and also the marine mammals, and to manage fisheries for prey species in such a manner as not to impede the biological productivity of dependent species;

*Suggest* that Indian Ocean coastal states promote implementation of the provisions under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and further foster regional arrangements/agreements to ensure the improved conservation of all cetaceans;

*Remind* all Indian Ocean parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity of their commitments to protect at least 10% of all ecosystems, including marine and coastal waters, and the opportunity this presents for the protection of cetacean hotspots and critical habitats;

*Urge* organizations using seismic surveys for offshore oil, gas and mineral exploration and production (and the countries in which they operate) to adopt international best practice to minimize impacts on cetaceans;

*Support* the wider adoption of responsible whale and dolphin watching guidelines and regulations, for the long-term benefit of both cetaceans and humans;

*Encourage* Indian Ocean states, in collaboration with the IWC and other relevant organizations to develop a collectively agreed action plan to improve conservation outcomes for cetaceans in the IOS;

*Draw attention* and agree to the fact that a small steering committee has been convened at the IOCS to assist in the scoping and initiation of a possible action plan.

Adopted this 20<sup>th</sup> day of July 2009

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