



PRESS RELEASE

Participation of ATLAFCO Member States in the 70th Biennial Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC)

The 70th biennial meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC 70) took place from 27 September to 2 October 2026 in Hobart, Australia.

This session was marked by the participation of sixty-five (65) countries, including five (5) member states of ATLAFCO: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco, Mauritania, and Senegal. This session, which coincided with the celebration of the organization's 80th anniversary, saw significant progress, notably the creation of an ad hoc working group to propose legal solutions to resolve the issue of quorum interpretation, a recurring theme at each session of the IWC.

Therefore, a **Code of Conduct** was adopted by consensus to guide the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

The participants also adopted by consensus the "**Hobart Declaration**," which constitutes the Commission's first collective statement on its role, history, and future. Setting aside political differences, the Commission spoke with one voice to highlight the challenges ahead.

Regarding so-called "management" mechanisms, the proposal to create a sanctuary for whales in the South Atlantic, introduced in 1998 by a group of countries not in favor of the sustainable use of living marine resources, was once again strongly rejected because it is not based on any scientific basis..

Concerning the proposed resolutions, three-quarters were put to a vote without consensus. This indicates differences of opinion between their sponsors and the other member states.:

- **Resolution on the global trade in whale swim bladders** and bycatch of endangered cetaceans. This resolution encourages countries to consider measures to monitor and regulate this trade, including risk assessments of bycatch and improved information sharing.

- **Resolution on ship collisions**: This resolution welcomes the efforts made by governments, the IWC, in particular its Panel of Experts on Ship Collisions, the shipping industry, NGOs and civil society to limit this phenomenon.

It also advocates the adoption of the guidelines developed by the Scientific Committee concerning collision risk analysis and encourages the collection and sharing of data.

The Resolution on cetacean strandings, considered a cross-cutting priority for the IWC, was adopted by consensus. This resolution recognizes the wealth of information that stranded whales can provide, particularly for ecosystem monitoring and biological and health data. It encourages collaboration between the various IWC committees working on information related to strandings.

Two draft resolutions were withdrawn by the sponsoring countries. These were the draft resolutions relating to **targeted capture of small cetaceans** linked to commercial fishing, on the one hand, and **to the implementation of a conservation and management program for whale stocks** aimed at the sustainable use of whale resources, on the other.

As for the Commission's budget for the period 2027-2028, it *was adopted by vote* in view of the strong divergences between the countries in favor of an annual increase of 4.5% and those which are for a budgetary status quo in view of the global economic context.

A 3% budget increase was adopted by vote.

At the closing of the 70th biennial session of the International Whaling Commission, member countries unanimously elected **Dr. Urbain TAS BRITO, Commissioner of Benin, as the new President of the IWC**. He will be assisted during his term by **Ms. Anne-Marie SVOBODA (EU/Netherlands), who was elected Vice-President**.

This trust placed in Africa and in an ATLAFCO member state to lead this important international organization, created in 1948, for the next two years, considered extremely sensitive for its future, demonstrates once again the increasingly strategic positioning of ATLAFCO within international organizations. This illustrates its significant role in ocean governance and reaffirms its commitment within high-level international fisheries management bodies, as established in the Abidjan Declaration adopted in April 2025 during the 11th Ministerial Conference.

This 70th session also provided an opportunity to reaffirm the strong support of African IWC member countries, Caribbean and Pacific nations as well as ATLAFCO member states for the principle of **the sustainable use of living marine resources** and for decision-making based primarily on sound scientific arguments and advice. It should be noted that ATLAFCO funded the participation of several scientists from its member states in the IWC Scientific Committee meeting held last April in Slovenia.

In this regard, ATLAFCO strongly emphasizes the contribution of sustainable use to human food security, social stability, and job creation for coastal communities and populations that depend directly on marine resources.

3 October 2026.