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**REPORT OF THE 57TH MEETING OF
THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION'S SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE**

Luis A. Pastene

*Institute of Cetacean Research,
Toyomi-cho 4-5, Chuo-ku,
Tokyo 104-0055, Japan*

INTRODUCTION

The International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling was signed in Washington D.C. on 2 December 1946. The Convention includes eleven Articles and a *Schedule*. The main objective of the Convention as set out in the last paragraph of its Preamble is “to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry”. The Convention gave origin to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1948, which has its secretariat office at Cambridge, United Kingdom.

The IWC is composed of 66 country members (as of 21 March 2006). The IWC has a Scientific Committee, a Conservation Committee, a Technical Committee and a Finance and Administration Committee as well as Aboriginal/subsistence and infractions sub-committees. The IWC convenes annual meetings to evaluate the current status of the different stocks of large whales and to make determinations on commercial and aboriginal whaling as well other determinations on management and conservation of these resources. The committees and sub-committees meet prior to the Commission meeting so that the Commission is able to make management and conservation determinations taking account of the reports of its committees and sub-committees, particularly the report of the Scientific Committee, which has the responsibility to assess the population status of different stocks and develop management procedures for different kind of whaling operations.

The objective of this paper is to report on the 57th meeting of the IWC Scientific Committee (Committee).

PLACE AND DATE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was held at the Lotte Hotel, Ulsan, Republic of Korea, from 30 May to 10 June. The meeting was chaired by Douglas DeMaster of the United States.

PARTICIPANTS AND DOCUMENTS

A total of 190 scientists participated in the meeting: 139 government delegates from 31 countries (27 from Japan); 44 invited participants; one non-member government observer; five from international organizations; one observer. Five members from the IWC secretariat and five interpreters also participated. A total of 224 scientific documents were available to the meeting, 22 submitted by Japanese scientists.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Date	Meeting	Content/activity
30 May	Plenary session	Introductory items of the agenda Read documents
31 May	Initial meeting of sub-committees	Election of chair; review agenda and documents
1-7 June	Meetings of sub-committees	Completion of the agenda and report
8-10 June	Plenary sessions	Completion of the agenda and report
11 June	Convenors meeting	Editorial work of the report; specify priorities for the next meeting

SUB-COMMITTEES

The following sub-committees and working groups met during the 57th Committee meeting:

Revised Management Procedure (RMP), which has as its main task to refine the Revised Management Procedure (RMP) for baleen whale species and make progress on some specific *implementations* of this procedure on some specific stocks; Aboriginal Whaling Management Procedure (AWMP) which has as its main task the development of a management procedure for aboriginal whaling and to determine catch quotas for some specific whaling cases; Bowhead, Right and Gray whales (BRG) with the main task of assessing the current population status of bowhead, right and gray whales; In-depth Assessment (IA) which evaluates the status of populations of minke whales species; Southern Hemisphere Whale Stocks (SH), engaged in the assessment of populations of the Southern Hemisphere humpback and blue whales; Stock Definition (SD) which discusses alternative definitions of stocks for management purposes; Estimation of By-Catch (BC) in charge of developing methods for estimating non-natural mortality of large whales (apart from direct catches); Environmental Concerns (E), which is in charge of evaluating the impact of environmental changes on cetaceans, cetacean-fisheries interactions and health problems in cetaceans; Small Cetaceans (SM), which evaluates the population status of some specific species of small cetaceans; Whale Watching (WW), which has the specific task of developing regulations for whale watching activities; DNA Testing (DNA), which discusses genetic techniques to develop and refine DNA registers with forensic capability for large whales and Scientific Permits (SP), which has the responsibility to review results derived from special permit catches and new research proposals that involve the catch of whales.

The report of each of these sub-committees and working groups are discussed and adopted during the plenary sessions of the Committee.

MAIN RESULTS OF THE 2005 COMMITTEE MEETING

Revised Management Procedure

Apart from some further work required on some general issues focused on refining the RMP e.g. the adoption of guidelines and requirements for implementing the RMP, the Committee completed the *pre-implementation* assessment for western North Pacific Bryde's whale and the Committee recommended that the *Implementation* of the RMP on this resource can commence. There will be two intersessional workshops and two annual meetings before the *Implementation* can be completed e.g. a catch quota for commercial whaling for this Bryde's whale stocks will be determined by the 2007 annual meeting. The Committee also started the *pre-implementation assessment* for North Atlantic fin whales.

Aboriginal Whaling Management Procedure

Block catch quotas for aboriginal whaling were determined previously for several species for the period 2003-2007. Each year the Committee reviews new information available mainly on stock structure and abundance, and determines whether or not the previously determined quotas require revision.

Regarding aboriginal whaling in Greenland for common minke and fin whales, the Committee reviewed information on abundance and stock structure provided by Danish scientists. The Committee considered this information as inadequate and therefore it was unable to provide satisfactory management advice and safe catch limits. Regarding aboriginal whaling in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for humpback whales, the Committee reviewed new information on stock structure of this species and agreed that catch limits of 20 animals for the period 2003-07 will not harm the stock.

Bowhead, Right and Gray Whales

Recent analyses of genetic data presented to the Committee had suggested the possibility that the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort (BCB) stock of bowhead whales is composed of more than one stock. The Committee reviewed the new information on stock structure and concluded that no change is needed to the current block quota for this stock for the period 2003-07. Considering the possibility of multiple-stocks the Committee recommended that an *Implementation Review* focusing on stock structure should be conducted in 2007 and agreed on a timeline in preparation for such review. Regarding the eastern North Pacific gray whales the Committee, based on the current information, concluded that no change is needed to the current block quota for 2003-07. An *Implementation Review* is scheduled for this stock in 2009.

In-depth assessment of whale stocks

One of the main topics of the Committee in recent years has been the attainment of actualized estimates of abundance of Antarctic minke whales. Preliminary estimations of abundance for this species were available for the 2005 meeting, and the Committee examined the possible reasons for the differences observed in the estimations between the second circumpolar surveys (CPII) and the third circumpolar surveys (CPIII), which were substantially lower for the latter. One of the possible reasons discussed was a greater sea ice expansion in recent

years which could have made minke whales less detectable in recent surveys. The highest priority for the Committee next year meeting will be to produce an agreed abundance estimate of Antarctic minke whales. The Committee also started the in-depth assessment of the stock of the Sea of Japan of common minke whale (J-stock). The Committee examined various pieces of information on distribution and abundance, stock structure, biological parameters and catch history. The Committee will continue with the assessment of this stock in the coming years.

Southern Hemisphere Whale Stocks

The Committee continued with the in-depth assessment of Southern Hemisphere humpback whales and agreed to complete this assessment during the 2006 annual meeting. To facilitate this, the Committee agreed to convene an intersessional workshop. The Committee also agreed to begin a comprehensive assessment of the Southern Hemisphere blue whale in 2006.

Special Permit

Three main topics were addressed by the Committee this year: a) review of results from existing research programs; the 2004/05 JARPA survey, the 2004 JARPN II survey and the 2004 Iceland survey; b) following established guidelines the Committee reviewed the new JARPA II research program and c) the Committee accepted the term of references and proposed agenda for the IWC sponsored JARPA review meeting to be held in December 2006.

Election of officers

Arne Bjorge (Norway) was elected to replace Doug DeMaster (US) as chair of the Scientific Committee for a new three years term. Deborah Palka (US) was elected to replace Arne Bjorge as vice-chair of the Scientific Committee for a new three years term.

2006 Scientific Committee Meeting

The 58th meeting of the Committee in 2006 will held in St. Kitts and Nevis between 26 May and 6 June.