

23d June 2022

**Written Statement to the 2022 UN Ocean Conference - submitted on behalf of
Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)**

WDC is grateful for the opportunity to submit this written statement to the 2022 UNOC in Lisbon.

Given the urgent need for dedicated and swift international action on the climate and biodiversity crises both of which affect the Ocean and its ability to fulfil its critical role for the future of the planet, WDC highlights the following key opportunities and challenges:

Marine mammals such as whales and dolphins are sentinel species that inform biodiversity measurements, ocean and climate policy, and, in requiring large areas of protection, so help to drive adequate protection measures for wider biodiversity. A reframing of whales and other ocean fauna as 'ecosystem engineers' and enhancing knowledge on how they positively benefit the wider ecosystem which they inhabit, is therefore needed.

As a matter of importance, we need to see the enhancement of Ocean recovery via nature-based solutions that restore biodiversity, choosing such solutions over geoengineering and technological solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises.

All Multilateral Environmental Agreements working on biodiversity protection and climate issues need a well-managed network of interlinkages and joint work programmes. They also need to be engaging with industry stakeholders and governments to achieve the best outcomes.

A strict zoning of ocean areas will be required to have a chance for biodiversity to recover within a sustainability regime. Zoned areas for biodiversity protection will need to be strictly protected. Marine biodiversity zones cannot be 'surface only' even if the main habitat use is in surface waters. The health of the water column and the benthos is essential for maintaining a healthy and functioning ecosystem.

As the Ocean is critical for climate change mitigation, it is also essential to reduce inequality within, and among, countries; creating conservation management plans so that every region, country, and community has an equal chance to utilize them. It is critical to engage with SIDS and coastal states with low levels of in-country infrastructure and low research budgets.

Wealthy countries need to assume a significantly greater role in the funding and supporting of MPAs, site management and conservation initiatives that restore ocean health. The development of new innovative funding mechanisms that incentivize long-term conservation efforts is key.

Partnerships with and between with government bodies and relevant industries aiming for the enhancement of knowledge that leads to better Ocean recovery solutions are needed on national and international levels.

As noted by UNCLOS 65 and 120, there is a need to recognize that a substantial number of cetacean species) require international cooperation for their conservation. This is of special importance given they play an essential role in providing globally important ecosystem functions that exceed direct use and economic qualification, and, as such, should exclude any exploitative value to safeguard those species and their role for future generations.

And finally, international agreements established before the development of the SDGs require enhancement of their conservation objectives as a priority over the previously damaging focus on exploitation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Butler-Stroud', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris Butler-Stroud
Chief Executive