

**Brief Summary: ‘At the crossroads’: Global Shipping Lanes and Whale Conservation.
Convened by: WCS, IUCN and the Government of France, February 15th, 2017**

During the preparatory meeting for June’s UN Oceans Conference to discuss implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development”), WCS, IUCN and the Government of France hosted a side event to raise awareness among UN member states and other stakeholders about global shipping and impacts on whales from noise and ship strikes. The event’s specific focus was reviewing the current state of knowledge regarding the issues of ship strikes and ocean noise, as well as the best practices in aligning shipping and whale conservation objectives. Beyond raising awareness in the lead-up to the June 2017 UN Oceans Conference, the specific goal of this event was to bring together key stakeholders to explore actions that could align conservation, industry, regulatory, and UN member states’ perspectives toward the Call for Action being developed for adoption during the Conference in June 2017.

Key Points

- Shipping and whale conservation issues are global in scale and require international collaboration and partnerships, particularly as human populations and use of resources increase and exert a cumulative suite of pressures on our marine ecosystems.
- The June 2017 UN Oceans Conference enables UN member states to engage in processes to reverse the state of decline of our oceans and meet the SDG14 targets, and therefore it is critical to incorporate these issues into the framework of these targets.
- Noise from ships and other sources is a pervasive, global issue. Discussion of best practice scenarios involves shipping industry and government working together and ranged from potential future quieter zones that could be part of MPAs or IMMAs, as well as to further efforts that implement quieting technology in the next generation of ships to reduce the impacts to whales and other marine life.
- Ship strikes are a global issue, but in some respects are localized issues of co-occurrence of whales and shipping traffic particularly around busy ports; discussions of best practice ranged from reduction of speeds to scenarios that result in the temporal and spatial separation of whales and ships.
- Targeted research on understanding impacts to whales from shipping traffic combined with technological advances have led to a number of successful conservation/industry partnerships to reduce impacts. These efforts can guide development of new and emerging measures.
- Discussions contrasting the effectiveness of voluntary versus mandatory guidelines were informative, and included key points such as:
 - There is a need to engage UN member states to work together to find solutions that are tractable with real, achievable benchmarks within the framework of SDG 14.
 - Voluntary guidelines being adopted and implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) need greater uptake, which may be improved by effective education, communication and incentive-based systems, along with clear understanding of whale distribution and occurrence and areas of biological importance for whales, while also weighing economic impacts to shipping.