



CETACEAN SPECIALIST GROUP

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Open Letter to Taiwan Authorities and Others Engaged in Industrial Development in Taiwan

The purpose of this letter is to highlight the importance placed by the [IUCN SSC Cetacean Specialist Group](http://www.iucn-csg.org) on the survival and recovery of Taiwanese white dolphins (*Sousa chinensis taiwanensis*) and on Taiwan's role as a steward of biodiversity. As you know, the Kunming-Montreal pact agreed at the recent Convention on Biodiversity's Conference of Parties (COP15) calls for the maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of the integrity, connectivity, and resilience of all ecosystems and the halting of human-induced extinctions of threatened species. This goal speaks directly to the situation of the Taiwanese white dolphin, meaning that Taiwan now has an opportunity to demonstrate a genuine commitment to meeting a fundamental target of the globally agreed biodiversity conservation framework. Also, as stated repeatedly in the guidelines for Performance Standard 6 of the [International Finance Corporation](http://www.ifc.org), one of the largest international lenders, protecting natural resources is essential for sustainable development and biodiversity contributes to both economic prosperity and human development.

Your country's plan to further expand the Taichung Outer Port Area runs directly counter to the COP15 target described above. Science has clearly demonstrated that the dolphins' vital habitat, especially the Dadu River Estuary, must be enhanced and restored, not destroyed, for the subspecies, a valuable part of Taiwan's natural heritage, to have any chance of recovery. Cutting this habitat in two by expanding the port area would almost certainly cause irreparable damage to the dolphin population. In recent postings on our website ([Dead Taiwanese white dolphin stranded in Tainan City](#); [Yet another threat to Taiwanese white dolphins is imminent](#); [Taiwanese white dolphin CSG focal species page](#)) we have drawn attention to the perilous state of this population and the immediate and longer-term threats to its survival. Taiwanese white dolphins have been declining for many years and are now thought to number only about 60 individuals, all living in a narrow strip of shallow habitat close along the west coast. The six "immediate actions" called for in [the 2019 Recovery Plan](#), which include locating any new development away from dolphin habitat and implementing strong measures to prevent dolphin mortality in entangling nets, have become absolutely urgent, and we hope you will treat them as such.

Our group consists of 130 scientists from around the world with expertise on whales, dolphins, and porpoises. As part of a volunteer network of over 10,000 scientific advisors within the IUCN Species Survival Commission, we seek to provide information on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, and their role in ecosystem health and functioning, provision of ecosystem services, and support to human livelihoods.

Sincerely,

Randall Reeves, Chair