



Circular Communication to Commissioners, Contracting Governments and
Members of the Scientific Committee
IWC.ALL.370

Scientific Committee and other IWC Meetings in May – Coronavirus

You may have seen Circular IWC.SC.224 regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Scientific Committee (SC) meeting. That Circular informed members of the SC that the Secretariat is monitoring the situation closely and will ensure participants are informed of developments relevant to the meeting.

The situation remains fluid but continues to worsen - both globally and within the UK where the SC meeting is scheduled to take place in May. It is not possible to confidently predict the scenario we may face in two months' time, but we cannot prolong the uncertainty indefinitely. Therefore, and in consultation with the IWC Chair & Vice-Chair, and SC Chair & Vice-Chair, the Secretariat has set a date of **2 April** when a decision on the way forward will be communicated to SC members, Commissioners and other IWC stakeholders.

This date has been selected primarily because it represents a deadline around which some of the largest payments are due (including the balance for hire of the meeting venue). The Secretariat has already responded to the uncertainty by delaying further payments but, by the end of this month, there will be no more room to manoeuvre. In the event that the SC cannot go ahead in the usual format, the Secretariat is taking all possible steps to minimise financial losses, for example by negotiating deferral of bookings rather than cancellation.

A variety of contingencies are now under consideration should the meetings in May be cancelled: postponement, scaling back, tailoring, virtual participation, and using a combination of different approaches. Planning would take into account a range of factors including the biennial timetable, the agenda of the meeting, costs already incurred and time zones. In the meantime, we continue to hope that the meeting will go ahead in May and as planned, and we are proceeding with non-cost incurring aspects as normal, which is why you may have seen Circular IWC.ALL.369 regarding Invited Participants to the meeting.

Finally, thank you for your patience and understanding. The IWC is of course, one of many organisations addressing these challenges at the moment.

Dr Rebecca Lent
Executive Secretary

c.c. Accredited observers to the IWC