



Circular Communication to Commissioners, Contracting Governments and  
Members of the Scientific Committee  
**IWC.ALL.372**

**Scientific Committee and other IWC Meetings in May 2020 – Coronavirus**

This Circular follows on from IWC.SC.224 and IWC.ALL.370 and concerns the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the Scientific Committee (SC) and other meetings due to take place in May 2020.

Previously, we explained the rationale for setting a date of 2 April 2020 on which a final decision would be taken on the viability of an in-person meeting. However, the situation is worsening daily. In accordance with measures put in place by the UK government today enforcing strict limits on in-person interaction, and the introduction of travel restrictions by many governments, the in-person meetings to be held in Cambridge in May cannot go ahead as originally planned.

In response to this difficult situation, the Chair and Vice-chair of the SC and the Secretariat have decided they must conduct the SC meeting, as far as possible, through a series of virtual sessions. There will be no in-person meeting in Cambridge in May, but members of the SC are asked to *hold the dates* as originally planned for their attendance. SC members are also asked to continue work on papers for submission to the SC in accordance with existing deadlines.

The Scientific Committee leadership and Secretariat are working hard to ensure that the Committee is still in a position to undertake the highest priority tasks as required by the Rules of Procedure and in order to provide the information required by the Commission.

The Chairs/Vice-chairs/Co-chairs of the Conservation Committee Planning Group, the SC pre-meetings, the Ecosystem Functioning workshop, the Joint CC/SC meeting, and the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness have also decided to move to virtual meetings. Participants are again asked to *hold the dates* that were planned for their in-person meetings whilst new plans are developed.

The Bureau meeting will also be conducted virtually. This will be held after the other meetings scheduled to take place in May and before 15 June.

These challenging decisions were reached in consultation with the leadership all the affected groups, and with the Bureau. Revised plans will be communicated from the relevant leadership to all participants over the next two weeks.

Please also be aware that the Secretariat is following UK government guidance for organisations to facilitate homeworking wherever possible. All staff are now working remotely with the aim to continue business as normal. We all share the objective of minimizing disruption to the business of the Commission in these difficult times.

Andrej Bibic  
Chair, IWC

*c.c. Accredited observers to the IWC*