

## **Report of the Conservation Committee Planning Group**

**Monday, 22 May 2017, Hotel Golf, Bled, Slovenia**

### **1. Welcome and aims of the meeting**

The meeting was chaired by Lorenzo Rojas Bracho (Chair of the Conservation Committee). Sarah Ferriss and Sarah Smith of the Secretariat were appointed as rapporteurs.

The Chair drew attention to the Terms of Reference (Annex A) for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group (CCPG) meetings, which were endorsed at IWC66 in 2016. The CCPG would ensure progression of the Conservation Committee work plan in the intersessional period, and help set the agenda for the biennial Conservation Committee meeting.

### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted with one change: the inclusion under Any Other Business of an item on the implementation of Resolution 2016-3 (related to Cetaceans and their contribution to Ecosystem Functioning).

The list of participants is given at Annex B and the adopted agenda is given at Annex C. A list of documents available to the meeting is given at Annex D.

### **3. Conservation Committee Strategic Plan and Work Plan**

#### **a) Update on Strategic Plan and Work Plan**

The Vice-chair of the Conservation Committee, Jamie Rendell (UK), drew attention to the Conservation Committee Strategic plan which was adopted by the Commission at IWC66 in 2016 and thanked Australia for their work on this document. The Conservation Committee Strategic Plan is now available on the IWC website (<https://iwc.int/conservation-committee>).

At the request of the Chair of the Standing Working Group on Bycatch, Stephanie Langerock (Belgium), the Group **agreed** to include the Bycatch SWG in the "Structure" section of the Strategic Plan. The Group also agreed to a suggestion of the Executive Secretary that the Strategic Plan form the basis of a presentation to the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-related Conventions, of which the IWC is now a member.

#### *Thematic strategic plans*

Rendell (UK) noted that the Conservation Committee has also developed thematic strategic plans, such as on whale watching and ship strikes, that sit beneath the overarching Strategic Plan. He noted that the Commission had adopted guidance on the development and structure of thematic strategic plans (see IWC/66/CC10). Rendell, supported by Deb Callister (Australia), suggested that longer thematic strategic plans could include a short summary at the front. The Group **agreed** with this approach.

Deb Callister (Chair of the Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans) added that the CMPs-SWG is about to start a mid-term review of its work programme. She proposed the CMP-SWGs could explore the potential for a thematic strategic plan on CMPs and give any relevant feedback on the structure.

### *Work Plan*

Rendell (UK) introduced the Conservation Committee's revised work plan (IWC/M17/CPG/05). He suggested the Group agree a process for regular updates to the document (e.g. by working with the Secretariat to seek periodic progress updates) and suggested reaching out to the wider Conservation Committee, including observers, who could help take actions forward. He noted that there are a range of actions that do not currently have leads assigned, for example on climate change and noise and asked if the CCPG could assist with these.

In response to a query from Simmonds (UK) on how observers can support Conservation Committee work, the Secretariat clarified that observers can contact relevant Working Group chairs if they are interested in supporting the delivery of the Conservation Committee's work programme.

Callister (Australia) proposed that a first step should be to ensure that all the necessary activities, as dictated by the Strategic Plan, are included in the Work Plan and then to identify gaps, including "leads" for each area.

The Group **agreed** that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee and the Secretariat work to identify leads and to update the work plan. They will then circulate an update to the Group, along with any outstanding requests for leads if necessary.

### b) Working Methods of the Conservation Committee

The Chair introduced document IWC/M17/CPG/01, which contains proposals for establishing Working Methods of the Conservation Committee.

The Group **agreed** to include additional sections in its working methods on collaboration with other agreements/organisations and the role of observers. The Group also **agreed** that the authors of the draft Working Methods could exercise discretion to add new topics if any arose during the drafting process. It **agreed** to use the Scientific Committee's process as an example and to identify any aspects of the rules of procedure or rules of debate that need consideration.

The Group **agreed** to establish a drafting group to include the Chair and Vice-chair of the Conservation Committee (Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, Mexico and Jamie Rendell, UK), the Secretariat (Greg Donovan, Sarah Ferriss, Sarah Smith), Miguel Iniguez (Argentina), Arne Bjorge (Norway) and Barbara Galletti (Chile). The Working Group will develop a proposal for discussion at the next CCPG and subsequently by the Conservation Committee.

### c) Timing of Conservation Committee meetings

The Vice-chair of the Conservation Committee, Jamie Rendell (UK) introduced document IWC/M17/CPG/04, which contains an early-draft proposal for annual Conservation Committee meetings for consideration at IWC67 in 2018. Rendell (UK) noted that the paper focuses on one option based on costs: having annual Conservation Committee meetings, back-to-back with the Scientific Committee during non-Commission years. The paper provides an analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of this option. He noted that consideration could be given to moving towards a standalone meeting in the future, but that back-to-back options was most cost effective in the short term.

During the subsequent discussion, some participants noted that allowing a gap between the SC and CC would allow time for the relevant SC recommendations to be finalised and discussed by the Conservation Committee. Others noted that having the CC back-to-back

with the SC, would mean that Conservation Committee members would have opportunity to sit in SC discussions, which could include joint working, for example on whale watching; this would help to justify the costs and duration of travel. The Group also noted the importance of maintaining the independence of the SC.

Galletti (Chile), supported by Rendell (UK), noted that annual Conservation Committee meetings had been discussed in the Conservation Committee at IWC66 and had achieved a high level of support but, according to IWC's Rules of Procedure, there was not time to submit a proposal to the Commission at the same meeting. It would be important that any future proposal is developed and consulted on in accordance with the relevant deadlines.

The Group **agreed** that Rendell (UK) would prepare a draft proposal for annual Conservation Committee meetings to be held back-to-back with the Scientific Committee. This will include a full justification of the need for annual Conservation Committee meetings. Rendell would circulate the draft to the CCPG and propose a process to take the proposal to IWC67. The Group also **agreed** to propose that any additional costs required to hold an annual Conservation Committee should be drawn from the core funds. The Group **agreed** that the Finance and Administration Committee should be involved at the earliest opportunity.

#### d) Voluntary National Conservation Reports

The Chair recalled that, at its 2016 meeting, the Conservation Committee established an intersessional group, comprised Australia, Mexico, UK and the Secretariat to review and develop the Voluntary National Conservation Report template and align it with the new strategic plan.

The Secretariat introduced document IWC/M17/CCPG/02 which provided context on current reporting arrangements and raised some issues to be considered in the review of the reporting template and process. The Secretariat noted the importance of reports being used by the Commission and useful to its Contracting Governments.

David Lundquist (New Zealand) drew attention to recent work in the Scientific Committee (SC) to revise the data required in the SC Progress reports and highlighted the need to avoid overlap in data requested by the Committees. Lundquist noted that some aspects of the reports (e.g. legal information) are not subject to regular change within Contracting Governments, and therefore the frequency of requesting this information could be reduced to help increase submission rates of Voluntary Conservation reports.

Eugenia Arguedas (Costa Rica) suggested that the report could be arranged according to the objectives of the Strategic Plan. It could also be useful to consider goals and indicators for the strategic plan and reporting progress on these.

The Group discussed the merits of biennial or annual reporting. Thematic reporting on a biennial basis was suggested by several participants. Mark Simmonds (UK) noted that the reporting process would ideally capture examples of conservation actions that are new or that demonstrate best practice and perhaps countries could be asked to focus on novel/new areas on a thematic basis.

The Group **agreed** that reporting should be both useful and used, and where possible aligned with other intergovernmental processes.

The Group **agreed** that a drafting group, chaired by Rojas-Bracho and Rendell and comprising Argentina, Australia, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, and the Secretariat would develop a proposal to bring to the next meeting.

#### **4. Progress update from intersessional Working Groups**

##### **a) Ship Strikes Working Group**

Bob Brownell (USA), on behalf of Doug DeMaster, Chair of the Ship Strikes Working Group, provided an update on the development and implementation of a Ship Strikes Strategic Plan and other intersessional activities. He summarised the aims and objectives of the Strategic Plan, noting that some of its work areas are relevant to both IWC members and non-members.

The Secretariat drew attention to discussions in the Scientific Committee which had established an e-mail group to provide input to the IUCN Important Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force and also to respond to requests for advice from the IMO.

Deb Callister (Australia) noted that Australia is developing a national strategy for mitigating ship strikes to cetaceans and other megafauna, with input from IWC experts, which will hopefully be finalised by mid-2017.

##### **b) Standing Working Group on Whale Watching**

Jamie Rendell (UK), on behalf of Ryan Wulff, Chair of the Whale Watching Working Group, provided an update on activities undertaken to implement the Strategic Plan for Whale Watching (SC/67a/WW01). Rendell explained that the Strategic Plan for Whale Watching needed revision, and that the Scientific Committee will hold an intersessional meeting to develop its input to the revised Strategic Plan.

Rendell noted that funding to develop the Whale watching Handbook had been secured through voluntary contributions from the UK and the USA and an offer from the Convention on Migratory Species to translate the Handbook. The Secretariat had issued an Invitation to Tender to identify a contractor to support this work, and Gianna Minton had been appointed.

Deb Callister (Australia) provided an update on engagement with IORA following the workshop 'Building sustainable whale watching tourism in the Indian Ocean region'. She noted that the IORA and IWC Secretariats were in discussion on next steps. Simmonds (UK) noted that the Scientific Committee had established a correspondence group to provide SC input to the IORA process.

##### **c) Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans**

The Chair of the Standing Working Group for Conservation Management Plans (SWG-CMP), Deb Callister (Australia) provided an update on intersessional activity since IWC66. She noted that an informal meeting of the SWG had been held in the margins of the Scientific Committee. She would work with the Secretariat and the SWG-CMP to develop an allocation process for the remaining CMP funds. The SWG-CMP will develop a six-monthly newsletter which will be circulated and put on the IWC website. Contributions to the mid-term review of the CMP Work Plan were invited.

##### **d) Standing Working Group on Bycatch**

The Chair of the Standing Working Group for Bycatch, Stephanie Langerock (Belgium) provided an update on the newly established Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and on next steps to take forward the recommendations made at IWC66. She noted that Arne Bjorge had agreed to serve as Vice-chair and Mark Simmonds as interim coordinator. The draft Terms of Reference for the SWG-Bycatch were being finalised and would be circulated. The next step will be the recruitment of a bycatch coordinator, the establishment of the Expert Panel, and the development of a Work Plan.

##### **e) Joint Conservation Committee- Scientific Committee Working Group**

The Chair drew attention to the meeting of the Joint Conservation Committee/Scientific Committee Working Group, which will be held in the afternoon of 22 May 2017.

f) New or emerging issues

Bob Brownell (USA) asked how the Conservation Committee could help with species of critical conservation concern for which urgent action was required e.g. the Vaquita. He stated that 12 small cetacean species and four populations of large whales were listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List. Of the small cetaceans, most occur in just one country and 10 of 12 are threatened only or primarily by bycatch. In all cases their situation is deteriorating.

Brownell highlighted the need for the IWC to identify such issues earlier and take timely action to reduce the threat, including interessionally if an urgent issue emerges before the Commission has considered it. Simmonds (UK) agreed and drew attention to the Small Cetaceans Task Team which aims to respond quickly to urgent conservation concerns.

Rendell (UK) stated it was important to identify when action is needed and also to consider the specific role of the IWC in taking action. He recalled discussions in the Small Cetaceans Subcommittee of the Scientific Committee, which had agreed on the need to improve the way the IWC communicates messages on critical issues to key people/fora. Some organisations use special envoys or rapporteurs. Rendell highlighted two issues: (i) what needed to be done now in relation to the Vaquita and (ii) in the longer term, the possibility of appointing someone as advocate or champion for the IWC to communicate such issues.

*Outreach on urgent issues*

The Executive Secretary reflected on the need for the IWC to have both a management role and a diplomatic role and to effectively convey its messages to high levels of governments and to intergovernmental organisations. He thought that the role of envoy warranted further consideration and could be put to the Commission. Mark Simmonds, UK, noted that the CMS has ambassadors to convey messages from their organisation.

Miguel Iniguez (Argentina) drew parallels with the role of the CMP coordinator, whose role is to work with and approach governments, NGOs and IGOs as required. The Small Cetaceans task team is also making progress.

Fabian Ritter, Belgium, recalled discussions on the coordinator for the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and proposed that this person should have the diplomatic skills necessary to reach out to other governments and intergovernmental organisations.

Callister (Australia), supported by the Chair of the Conservation Committee, suggested that there could be a range of different potential responses and it would be useful to document alternative approaches, including *inter alia* the envoy role, Commission communiques etc. and to explore how to reach out to non-member countries and how to access emergency funds. She also suggested that species of emerging conservation concern could be a standing agenda item.

Andrej Bibic (Slovenia) stated that it is important to think longer term about how cases such as the Vaquita can be prevented in the future, and how the necessary diplomatic pressure can be put on governments.

Gemma Harper (UK) agreed that the Conservation Committee needed to use these types of approaches to fulfil its mission. She further noted the need for the IWC to build its social and economic evidence base on such issues.

The Group **agreed** that Brownell, Rojas-Bracho, Rendell and Simmonds would draft a paper for the next meeting of the CCPG, for subsequent submission to the Conservation

Committee regarding species of critical concern and the different actions that might be taken.

The Group **agreed** to propose that the Conservation Committee recommend species of emergent and urgent concern as a new standing item on the Commission agenda.

#### *Vaquita*

Recalling the Commission Resolution 2016-5 at IWC66 on the Vaquita and in recognition of the urgency of the situation, the Group discussed the need to bring the issue to the attention of the Bureau who were meeting that evening.

Gemma Harper (UK) suggested that the UN Oceans Conference, in June 2017, might bring an opportunity for a concerted effort on the Vaquita.

The Group **agreed** that discussion on the Vaquita would be brought to the Bureau that evening with a view to identifying any further action that the IWC might take.

### **5. Finance**

The Chair of the Intersessional Group on Strengthening IWC Finance, Stephanie Langerock (Belgium), speaking also on behalf of the Chair of the Steering Group for the Voluntary Conservation Fund, Catherine Bell (UK), drew attention to document IWC/M17/CPG/06 which included an update on progress implementing the recommendations of the ICGSF.

Langerock noted that the Steering Group for the Voluntary Conservation Fund had allocated funding to whale watching and bycatch, with a further £100,000 to be allocated. The Steering Group planned discussions on the funding allocation process, including the fund criteria, taking into consideration the priorities in the Conservation Committee Strategic Plan.

Langerock noted that one of the recommendations of the ICGSF was to establish budgeted work plans and that some proposed next steps were outlined in IWC/M17/CPG/06, including a draft budget template for the projects that would require external funds.

It was noted that the budget template did not include a section on how the project contributes to the Conservation Committee strategic plan and the group **recommended** that this be added.

The Chair of the SWG-CMPs (Deb Callister) and the Chair of the SWG-Bycatch (Stephanie Langerock) **agreed** to trial the template in order to identify any amendments needed.

### **6. Relationship with other inter-governmental organisations (Secretariat)**

The Secretariat provided an update on engagement with other inter-governmental organisations and proposals for next steps (IWC/M17/CPG/03REV1).

The Secretariat drew attention to the forthcoming UN Oceans Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) and noted the potential for the IWC to register Voluntary Commitments to this Conference.

Several participants indicated **support for** the participation of the IWC in the Conference and the Group **agreed** in principle with the submission of voluntary commitments including on bycatch, whale watching, entanglement. The UK drew attention to the 'Our Oceans' conference in Malta later in 2017 as a further opportunity for countries and organisations to make commitments.

The Secretariat also drew attention to a formal request from World Animal Protection, as the Secretariat for the Global Gear Initiative (GGGI), asking the IWC to participate in the GGGI. The Secretariat proposed to (i) exchange letters with GGGI to convey IWC support and set out the potential for cooperation; and (ii) explore the potential for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and (as appropriate) make recommendations to the Commission in 2018. There was some discussion on how the GGGI work aligns with the work of the SWG-bycatch and the entanglement network. Simmonds (UK) suggested that the bycatch work could be highlighted through the GGGI. The Secretariat suggested that sharing of data with the GGGI could be a useful way to engage and noted potential synergies with the IWC entanglement database.

## **7. Any other business**

### *Resolution 2016-3: Cetaceans and their contribution to Ecosystem Functioning*

Galletti drew attention to Commission Resolution 2016-3 related to Cetaceans and their contribution to Ecosystem Functioning which, *inter alia*, directs the Conservation Committee to undertake the review previously identified and directs the Conservation and Scientific Committees to further incorporate the contribution made by live cetaceans to ecosystem functioning into their work.

Fabian Ritter (Belgium) highlighted discussions in the Scientific Committee on this topic. The UK asked how social science could be incorporated into discussions on the Resolution.

The Group **agreed** that Galletti and Ritter should establish a small working Group to make recommendations on how the Conservation Committee could address this Resolution.

## **Annex A**

### **Terms of Reference for annual Conservation Committee Planning Group meeting**

The Conservation Committee Planning Group is tasked with helping set the agenda for the biennial Conservation Committee meeting and progression of the Conservation Committees work plan in the intersessional period.

It will:

- Consider the Committee's progress since the last meeting of the Committee, in particular with regards to intersessional work, and support continued effective delivery of its work.
- Identify key discussions, priorities and deliverables for inclusion on the agenda of the next meeting of the Committee.
- Support the Chair in preparing for Conservation Committee meetings.
- Provide an additional opportunity for discussing the strategic development of the Conservation Committee, particularly with regards to its outward facing strategic plan, strategic development of priorities, engagement with other organisations, and funding.

#### *Membership*

The group is intended to be small and focused and does not replace a full meeting of the Conservation Committee. Attendance is not restricted but may be limited by available space. It will primarily be composed of the Chair and vice-chair of the Conservation Committee, Chairs of the Committee's standing working groups, and nominees from contracted governments. Additional expertise will be invited as appropriate to the agenda by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Conservation Committee. The meeting will be Chaired by the Chair of the Conservation Committee.

#### *Timings*

The Conservation Committee planning meeting should meet at least annually and where possible in conjunction with meetings of the Scientific and/or Conservation Committee to ensure best use of resources.



## **Annex B**

### **List of Participants**

#### **ARGENTINA**

Miguel Iniguez

#### **AUSTRALIA**

Deb Callister

William De la Mare

#### **BELGIUM**

Stephanie Langerock

Fabian Ritter

#### **CHILE**

Barbara Galletti

#### **COLOMBIA**

Ana Maria Gonzalez

#### **COSTA RICA**

Eugenia Arguedas

Javier Rodriguez-Fonseca

#### **GERMANY**

Nicole Hielscher

#### **MEXICO**

Lorenzo Rojas Bracho

#### **NETHERLANDS**

Anja Pel-Roest

#### **NEW ZEALAND**

David Lundquist

Julia Reynolds

#### **NORWAY**

Arne Bjørge

#### **PORTUGAL**

Luis de Freitas

#### **SLOVENIA**

Andrej Bibic

#### **SPAIN**

Begona Santos

#### **UK**

Gemma Harper

Jamie Rendell

Mark Simmonds

#### **USA**

Caroline Doherty

Robert Brownell

#### **OBSERVERS**

Justin Cooke (IUCN)

#### **IWC SECRETARIAT**

Simon Brockington

Sarah Ferriss

David Mattilla

Katie Penfold

Sarah Smith

## **Annex C**

### **Agenda**

#### **1. Welcome and aims of the meeting**

- a) Appointment of Chair
- b) Appointment of Rapporteur
- c) Review of Terms of Reference and aims of the meeting
- d) Review of documents available to the meeting

#### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

#### **3. Conservation Committee Strategic Plan and Work Plan (Lorenzo Rojas Bracho/Jamie Rendell)**

- a) Update on strategic plan and work plan
- b) Working Methods of the Conservation Committee
- c) Timing of Conservation Committee meetings
- d) Voluntary National Conservation Reports

#### **4. Progress update from intersessional Working Groups**

- a) Ship Strikes Working Group (Bob Brownell, USA)
- b) Standing Working Group on Whale Watching (Jamie Rendell, UK)
- c) Standing Working Group on Conservation Management Plans (Deb Callister, Australia)
- d) Standing Working Group on Bycatch (Stephanie Langerock, Belgium)
- e) Joint Conservation Committee- Scientific Committee Working Group (Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho, Mexico)
- f) New or emerging issues (Bob Brownell, USA)

#### **5. Finance**

- a) Intersessional group on strengthening finance (Stephanie Langerock, Belgium)
- b) Voluntary Conservation Fund (TBD)

#### **6. Relationship with other inter-governmental organisations (Secretariat)**

#### **7. Any other business**

## Annex D

### List of documents

Document Number	Title	Authors
<b><i>Secretariat information</i></b>		
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/GEN/01</b>	Draft Agenda	IWC Secretariat
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/GEN/02</b>	Final Agenda	IWC Secretariat
<b><i>Primary papers</i></b>		
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/01</b>	Proposal to establish Working Methods for the Conservation Committee	IWC Secretariat
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/02</b>	IWC Voluntary Conservation Reports	IWC Secretariat
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/03Rev1</b>	Update on engagement with other organisations	IWC Secretariat
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/04</b>	Proposal for annual meetings of the Conservation Committee	UK
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/05</b>	Conservation Committee Work Plan 2016-2020	Chair and Vice Chair of the Conservation Committee
<b>IWC/M17/CPG/06</b>	Interim Progress Report on the Implementation of IWC Recommendations on Strengthening IWC Financing	Chair of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Strengthening IWC Financing and Chair of the Steering Group for the Voluntary Conservation Fund