



INTERNATIONAL  
WHALING COMMISSION

## Minutes

### Bureau Meeting Thursday 14 January 2021 Virtual Meeting

16h00 to 19h00 UK time

<b>Attendance:</b>	Andrej Bibic	(Chair, Slovenia)
	Amadou Televiel Diallo	(Vice-Chair, Guinea)
	Miguel Iniguez	(Argentina)
	Holger Martinsen	(Argentina)
	Lucia Scheinkman	(Argentina)
	Horace Walters	(St Lucia)
	Branka Tavzes	(Slovenia)
	Rosie Carpenter	(CC Vice-Chair, United Kingdom)
	Gemma Harper	(WGOE Co-Chair, United Kingdom)
	Alisha Falberg	(United States)
	Tom Gleason	(United States)
	Madi Harris	(United States)
	Mi Ae Kim	(United States)
	Lim Fu Lim	(United States)
	Lisa Phelps	(WGOE Co-Chair, United States)
	Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, United States)
	Rebecca Lent	(Secretariat)
	Katie Penfold	(Secretariat)
	Moussa Ki Sow	(Secretariat)
	Iain Staniland	(Secretariat)
	Mark Tandy	(Secretariat)
	Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho	(CC Chair)
	Robert Suydam	(SC Chair)
	Alex Zerbini	(SC Vice-Chair)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Emmanuel Mantey Mensah	(Ghana)

## **Introduction**

The Chair welcomed participants to this virtual meeting and reminded them that the meeting was convened in line with Rule of Procedure B.4.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would serve as rapporteur.

The agenda was adopted, along with the minutes of the previous meeting held virtually on 16 October 2020. These minutes can be accessed via the following link: <https://archive.iwc.int/?r=18707>

### **1. Discussion of the Commission's financial situation and process for the budget to be adopted at IWC68**

- **Budget for 2022-23: small discussion groups**

The Secretariat provided a brief update on behalf of the Chair of the Budgetary Sub-Committee (BSC) regarding progress with the work to produce a sustainable, balanced budget for 2022/23.

The Bureau were informed that 2 informal groups have been established. Group 1 is comprised of the Commission leadership, including the Chair and Vice-Chair, and has been tasked with reviewing all of the Commission's expenditure. Group 2 is comprised of science-engaged Commissioners and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC, and their role is to advise Group 1 in relation the Scientific Committee's budget. These Groups held introductory meetings in December 2020.

The next phase of the work is for the Groups to meet again to look at the issues in more detail, and the BSC Chair will keep the Bureau apprised of progress. It is anticipated that balanced budget options will be presented to the Bureau for their comments ahead of the 60-day deadline. The Chair thanked the BSC Chair and the small Groups and encouraged Bureau members to be engaged with this important work.

- **Update on status of contributions**

The Secretariat updated the Bureau on the collection of contributions and voting status of members. The Bureau noted that 53 Contracting Members had paid contributions and 35 were without voting rights. The Bureau were informed that this position was likely to have been negatively impacted by the deferment of the Commission meeting, which often acts as an incentive to pay. In turn, the Commission's bad debt provision had to be increased, putting additional pressure on an already tight budget.

It was recognised that Contracting Governments may be struggling due to the response to COVID-19, but it was also noted that the poor collection rate was having a negative impact on the Commission's cashflow. The Secretariat will closely monitor this situation.

## **2. Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE): status of papers.**

The Co-Chair of the WGOE drew Bureau members' attention to the Circular that was issued on 6 January 2021 regarding the revised timeline for the Governance Review work programme. She confirmed that revised papers incorporating comments from the previous round of consultation would be issued by the end of January 2021 and noted that the group would be able to accept comments on these papers in all the Commission's working languages. The Co-Chair also noted that it may be possible to extend the comment period that ends on 15 March, pending consultation with the WG-OE members. The Co-Chair noted that she is working with the Secretariat to explore whether there is adequate funding for simultaneous translation.

The Co-Chair of WGOE thanked COMHAFAT/ATLAFCO for the opportunity to discuss the Governance Review papers at their meeting in December 2020 and welcomed further opportunities to engage with regional groups on this issue.

## **3. Chair's Regional meetings: readout from COMHAFAT and preparation for others**

The IWC Chair has launched a series of three virtual Regional Chair's Meetings to improve communication with all Commissioners during this extended intersessional period due to the pandemic. The first was held in December 2020 with COMHAFAT members. The meeting was an opportunity to update Commissioners on the WG-OE and Budgetary processes, encourage more engagement in IWC work, and to discuss the challenge of receiving timely IWC contributions during the pandemic. The Chair thanked COMHAFAT for their support of this Chair's Regional Meeting including simultaneous translation. The Executive Secretary of COMHAFAT thanked the IWC Chair for his letter noting the Bureau's recommendation to avoid intersessional votes.

The IWC Vice-Chair noted the difficulties faced by some COMHAFAT members with their ability to clear their arrears of contributions. He also underscored the importance of translation to ensure the active engagement of Commissioners and delegations from COMHAFAT. The Vice Chair noted that COMHAFAT is willing to contribute to support for translation of documents and for simultaneous translation. In another important development to increase engagement, the Vice-Chair announced that COMHAFAT, in collaboration with Japan, is planning a cetacean survey in 2021 and would like to explore having a scientist from the SC join the survey. The SC Chair welcomed this proposal, noted that the SC Vice-Chair leads the work on international cruises, and suggested that a paper at SC68C provide more details to the SC.

Future Regional Meetings are planned for early 2021 in the Caribbean and in the Pacific Islands region with the goal of communicating important updates in preparation for the IWC68 meeting in September 2021.

#### **4. Update from the Secretariat, including the possible sale of the Red House**

**75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** – The Secretariat updated the Bureau on plans for marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the IWC. A logo has been prepared along with an infographic, which illustrates the key threats facing cetaceans today and the action IWC is taking to address them. While the Infographic does not aim to encompass all IWC responsibilities or work programmes, it addresses the most common question asked by both media and public, which is to identify the main threats to whales and how these are being addressed by IWC. The infographic follows the *Guidance on use of the IWC Website* and features only Commission-endorsed work programmes. The year-long Communications Plan will feature key highlights of the IWC, starting with the re-launch of the Journal of Cetacean Research and Management.

**InforMEA** – The Secretariat have joined the United Nations Information Portal on Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other related Organisations, named InforMEA. It is a ‘one-stop portal’ for information searchable across IGOs by key terms and an effective method for increasing awareness of IWC programs. The InforMEA platform allows users easy access to key Commission documents such as the Convention and Schedule and also gives IWC free access to some software packages that are tailor-made for IGOs. InforMEA has a centralized calendar which will be particularly critical in the post-pandemic period when many postponed meetings will need to be rescheduled.

**Database of Recommendations (DoR)** - The Secretariat reported that the Database of Recommendations (DoR), which implements Resolution 2014-04 from the Commission, is now in operating mode and will be publicly available on the IWC website by the end of February. The DoR includes recommendations endorsed at IWC66, IWC67, SC68A and SC68B, and CC68A. Additional back data are being entered as staff time allows. The Secretariat has been working closely with the leadership of the SC and CC to provide relevant extracts from the DoR and ensure that it is used to review implementation and effectiveness of recommendations as anticipated by the CC-SC and mandated by the Commission. Follow-up actions are being monitored and noted in the DoR so that progress can be tracked in preparation for future SC and CC deliberations. At IWC68 the use of the DoR will be extended to other IWC subgroups.

**Secretariat informal survey of other IGOs on contributions** - As requested at the October 2020 Bureau meeting, the Secretariat informally queried a number of IGOs regarding their experience under the pandemic with delays in or lack of contributions from members. Those IGOs with a similar member composition are experiencing some of the same challenges as IWC. Many noted that the situation is expected to become more acute in the coming years as the impact of COVID-19 is felt. There is a wide array of methods used to encourage payment and to address the short fall in contributions.

**Red House** - The Secretariat issued a circular on Monday 11 January 2021 announcing the intended postal vote for the sale of the Red House and provided a background document. The voting by postal ballot will be open for one month. The Red House has been closed since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown rules in place in the UK and all staff are working

remotely. This situation is unlikely to change until staff have been vaccinated in the coming months.

## **5. Plans for the 2021 Scientific Committee Meeting SC68C**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee provided an update on the plans for SC68C, noting that it will be held virtually from 27 April to 14 May 2021 due to the pandemic. In order to be able to address all but the most complex agenda items, convenors will hold intersessional meetings prior to SC68C, and all sub-committees will hold at least one virtual session during the SC meeting in April/May. While the virtual meetings present special challenges, the Bureau members noted the opportunity for expanded participation from a broader array of countries.

The Bureau members thanked the Chair and Vice-Chair of the SC for their leadership during a difficult period and their willingness to work virtually. The Chair of Finance and Administration reiterated that due to the need to have a Commission-level decision about the timing of IWC69, the SC68C would need to provide both a one-year and a two-year budget for consideration.

## **6. Major agenda items for IWC68**

The Bureau had a preliminary discussion regarding appropriate agenda items for the forthcoming IWC 68 meeting in September 2021. The Bureau will discuss the meeting agenda in detail at its next meeting.

The Bureau noted that the COVID-19 situation remains a serious concern and could impact upon whether it is possible to host an in-person meeting in 2021. This issue will be kept under constant review and discussed again at the next Bureau meeting.

The Bureau resolved to meet again between 15 – 25 May, ahead of the 100-day deadline for submitting the draft agenda of the IWC 68 to the Commission.

## **7. AOB**

### ***Media and other queries regarding Japan***

The Bureau was made aware of a heavy volume of enquiries over the holiday period regarding cetacean issues in Japan, including the minke whale that was accidentally caught in Taiji fishing nets. The queries demonstrate considerable misunderstanding about IWC and result in accusations that the IWC is incompetent or irrelevant. There is also no information available and no response to enquiries from the Government of Japan.

Whilst clearly a matter for the Government of Japan, misunderstanding over the IWC's role risks extensive reputational damage and so the Secretariat provides a neutral, factual response. Standard templates are used to minimise the time involved but has still, diverted a lot of staff time.

The Bureau recommended appropriate follow-up in order to raise awareness of this situation and to provide contact information for media and stakeholder inquiries.

### ***Bern II meeting***

The Chair noted that he will lead a small delegation of IWC to the Bern II meeting over the last two weeks of January 2021, along with the Vice-Chair of the SC, the Executive Secretary and Head of Programme Development of the Secretariat. This meeting is designed to ensure input from the Biodiversity Conventions (BLG) in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), negotiated under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The IWC programmes brought to the CBD for synergies with the GBF are fully in line with the recommendations of the Commission. The Chair noted that the Commission will be kept informed of the deliberations of this meeting.

### ***Report from Conservation Committee Chair and Vice-Chair***

The Conservation Committee Chair noted that he has reached out to the CC membership regarding a process to compile comments on the draft WG-OE papers. In addition, he referred to the Circular requesting nomination for a Chair for the Ship Strikes Working Group, to which no responses had been received. The Secretariat will send a second Circular and the CC Chair will reach out to a few governments. If there are no government nominations, then observers will be considered. This is not prohibited by the Working Procedures of the CC and is in line with leadership of sub-committees in the SC.

### ***Dates of next Bureau meeting***

The Bureau will aim to meet in mid-May 2021 in order to reach a decision on the draft agenda for IWC68. This will also be an opportunity for the Bureau to consider the overall situation with the pandemic and the likelihood of being able to hold an in-person meeting of the Commission in 2021. The Bureau was reminded that the 100-day deadline for IWC68 is 29 May, and the 60-day deadline is 8 July.

The meeting closed at 19:20 GMT, Thursday 14 January 2021.