



INTERNATIONAL
WHALING COMMISSION

**Minutes of the Bureau Meeting
Wednesday 21 April 2021**

Virtual Meeting

18h00 to 20h00 UK time

Attendance:

Bureau:

Andrej Bibic (IWC Chair)
Miguel Iniguez (Argentina)
Lucia Scheinkman (Argentina)
Branka Tavzes (Slovenia)
Horace Walters (St. Lucia Commissioner)

Cat Bell (U.K.)
Tom Gleason (U.S.)
Mi Ae Kim (U.S.)
Lisa Phelps (U.S., WGOE Co-Chair)
Ryan Wulff (U.S. Commissioner)

Invited:

Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho (CC Chair)
Robert Suydam (SC Chair)
Alex Zerbini (SC Vice Chair)

Secretariat:

Alisha Falberg
Rebecca Lent
Katie Penfold
Iain Staniland
Mark Tandy

Apologies:

Telivel Diallo (IWC Vice Chair)
Emanuel Mensah (Ghana)
Paula Perrett (BSC Chair)

WELCOME FROM CHAIR

The Chair thanked the Bureau for meeting on such short notice, but believed it was necessary to discuss the challenges of having an in-person IWC68 meeting in September 2021. This meeting was convened in accordance with Rules of Procedure B.4 with the single topic of the IWC68 meeting.

APPOINTMENT OF RAPPORTEUR

It was agreed that the Secretariat will serve as Rapporteur.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

1. PLANS FOR IWC68

a. Decisions to be made

The Chair identified the key Commission issues to be discussed in 2021. Some of these issues require a decision in 2021 in order for the Commission to continue its work in 2022 (such as the budget) whilst others would benefit from some discussion in 2021 by the Commission. Various options for decision making were discussed as well as the format for the IWC68 meeting (in-person or virtual).

It was noted that the decision on the budget would include the SC budget request to be presented following the SC meeting, which will be finished on 14 May 2021. Other time-critical decisions include extension of the IWC leadership roles (Chairs, Vice-Chairs, for the IWC and its subsidiary bodies), any elements of work plans from the other subsidiary committees of the Commission that are necessary to continue the intersessional work, and a proposed extension in the contract for the Executive Secretary.

The Bureau recognized the difficulties in providing a full report from 3 SC meetings (SC68A, SC68B, SC68C) should the Commission meeting be held virtually, and proposed that Commission wait to adopt the full SC reports at the next in-person Commission meeting. The SC Chair reminded the Bureau that the SC workplan for 2022 will be incorporated into the budget request.

Issues that could possibly benefit from discussion by the Commission in 2021 included elements of the proposals and discussions underway in the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WG-OE) on the Governance Review. The Bureau also mentioned the work of the BSC Small Discussion Groups on achieving a balanced budget. A Commission-level discussion on the CBD Post-2020 process would be an important step in ensuring IWC input into the development of the new Biodiversity Goals.

b. Options for decision-making

The Chair noted three options for decision making, each with advantages and disadvantages:

- postal vote,
- decision at a virtual meeting (consensus or vote),
- and in-person meeting (consensus or vote).

Decision making by postal vote has been used in the past for decisions that do not require much debate or for urgent issues that cannot wait. The Bureau underscored the concerns that have been raised regarding the ability of some contracting governments to participate in intersessional voting due to arrears in contributions.

The Bureau noted that discussion, debate and decision-making at a virtual meeting would create challenges, particularly because Commissioners might not have time to fully consider and debate the issues. Because certain work areas are long-term and impactful (such as budget reform, and WG-OE work), the Commission would benefit from more detailed, in-depth discussion. In most cases, voting in a virtual setting could be challenging and therefore the Bureau felt a virtual meeting agenda should be narrow and any decisions should be limited to those likely to meet consensus. Topics requiring more fulsome discussion should be postponed until an in-person can be held.

c. Agenda and timing of a possible virtual meeting

Bureau members mentioned that when other IGOs have held virtual meetings, the agenda and overall length of the meeting were strictly limited. In addition, preparation for virtual meetings should include the development of 'virtual meeting protocols' which would be shared with all Commissioners well in advance of the meeting. The protocols would include procedures for asking for the floor, designation of delegation leads (for Contracting Governments and for Accredited Observers), time limits on interventions, and clear procedures for reaching decisions. As with in-person meetings, a virtual Commission meeting would require presentation of credentials by Contracting Governments, a process that would also need to be conducted virtually. Budgetary consequences of a virtual meeting format were discussed by the Bureau members, in addition to the impacts of a longer gap between in-person Commission meetings given the IWC's Financial regulations.

Regarding quorum, a meeting (whether virtual or in-person) requires a simple majority of countries to be present (RoP B1). Therefore, the protocols for a virtual meeting should include how to determine 'presence' in a virtual setting, taking into account possible technical difficulties due to connection issues which can arise.

- d. The Chair thanked the Bureau for this input which he will take under advisement in developing a proposal for IWC68.

The meeting concluded at 20:04 GMT, Wednesday 21 April 2021.