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**Update to the Scientific Committee on Co-operation with other Organisations – May 2020-
May 2021**

Secretariat



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Update to the Scientific Committee on Co-operation with other Organisations – May 2020- May 2021

For SC68C

IWC Secretariat

Introduction

The Commission and the Scientific and Conservation Committees have adopted numerous recommendations over the years for strengthening engagement with other organisations. The IWC Secretariat, in collaboration with members of the SC, CC and SWGs have been working to take carry out these mandates, in addition to exploring newly emerging opportunities.

The pandemic has hampered the ability of the Secretariat and the CC and SC to be engaged with other IGOs over the past year, as is the case globally. While virtual meetings are often being used as opportunities to continue IGO work, staff time continues to be stretched the usual constraints of FTEs and budget have underscored the need to establish priorities for engagement and representation by other means, such as through participation in virtual meetings as well as engaging members of the IWC community.

The Secretariat regularly updates Contracting Governments and observers on the relevant activities in other IGOs and these include requests for assistance in preparation for IWC engagement, whether by the Secretariat or member country representatives.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and Committee on Fisheries (COFI)

The IWC Executive Secretary and BMI Coordinator attended the virtual meeting of the 34th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in February 2021. IWC interventions were provided in relation to the need to address cetacean bycatch, in particular to welcome the new technical Guidelines to Reduce and Prevent Marine Mammal Bycatch in Capture Fisheries (SC/68C/ForInfo 107), and to promote collaborative opportunities between the FAO, fisheries management organisations and the IWC. The FAO's Responsible Fishing Operations Workplan (SC/68C/ForInfo/108) was presented to the COFI meeting, and this includes references to potential collaboration between the FAO and the BMI.

The IWC Secretariat has continued to engage with the FAO Secretariat in relation to potential collaboration to promote the guidelines, including: through capacity building efforts; in pilot projects; review and updated technical information on mitigation measures; and in development of outreach material such as technical factsheets and audio visual materials explaining different mitigation measures in the guidelines.

The IWC Secretariat is also collaborating with the FAO, providing annual statistics on anthropogenic cetacean mortality for their annual publication of fishery data, using information from the IWC Progress Reports or submitted directly to the IWC. The IWC Secretariat participates in a number of task groups under the Coordinating Working Party on Fishery Statistics, including the Ad-hoc task group on reference harmonization standard, the ad-hoc task group on fishing effort concepts and the ad-hoc task group on catch concepts.

In a process connected to the COFI meeting, the FAO hosts the [Regional Secretariat's Network](#) (RSN) which is an organisation of Executive Secretaries/Directors of Regional Fishery Management Organisations and other Regional Bodies, including IWC. The IWC Secretariat's Executive Secretary

joined the RSN's virtual meeting in February 2021. The RSN is an excellent opportunity for the IWC to exchange information on Secretariat-level issues (such as the mechanics for virtual meetings) and is particularly important for collaboration on bycatch with RFMOs. The IWC Executive Secretary participated in a small group of RSN members preparing comments on the Terms of Reference for the RSN in an effort to increase its potential for effective cross-RSN leadership collaboration.

Regional Fishery Management Organisations (RFMOs) and Common Oceans Project

Working in collaboration with RFMOs, the BMI has submitted a draft concept to the GEF/FAO [Common Oceans](#) ABNJ Tuna Phase 2 project development team. The overall project is focused on improving the sustainability of the world's tuna fisheries. The IWC's proposed concept aims to collaboratively advance efforts to assess and mitigate cetacean bycatch in tuna fisheries across two ocean basins - the Indian Ocean (with possible collaboration with [IOTC](#) and other partners) and the Pacific Ocean (with possible collaboration with SPREP, [WCPFC](#)). The project would also lay the foundation to scale up to other regions and fisheries. At regional level, the proposed activities fall across three themes:

- 1) Assessing cetacean bycatch, and data gaps across an ocean basin to inform RFMOs on the scale and scope of issues in relevant fisheries and provide a baseline;
- 2) Building regional capacity and awareness on cetacean bycatch and available solutions; working with key countries to train fishers and fisheries managers and observers in cetacean bycatch mitigation, monitoring and safe handling and release and the review and dissemination of relevant information on best practices to address bycatch.
- 3) Collaboratively developing recommendations to address cetacean bycatch across multi-lateral environmental and fisheries agreements. The IWC will focus on developing recommendations on cetacean conservation through its own Committees and Commission processes and build a coordinated and collaborative approach with national governments participating in both IWC and the relevant RFMOs.

Finally, the IWC Secretariat commissioned a review of 16 RFMOs in relation to how they are addressing cetacean bycatch in their relevant fisheries. This review was discussed during SC68B and in the Conservation Committee meeting in 2020 and has since been revised in preparation for consideration in a peer-reviewed publication.

IOTC

The IWC Secretariat has prioritised engagement with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in relation to cetacean bycatch. Prioritisation of the IOTC was recommended by the Scientific Committee (Recommendation SC1878 and SC2095 and SC20106) and by the Conservation Committee (Recommendation BMI906, BMI 1919). The IWC and IOTC Secretariats held a joint meeting in September 2020 to discuss potential collaborative activities on cetacean bycatch (SC/68C/ForInfo/109) and this was briefly presented to the IOTC's 16th Working Party on Ecosystems and Bycatch (WPEB) meeting (SC/68C/ForInfo/110). The IOTC's WPEB is planning to work on an ecological risk assessment for cetaceans across the region in collaboration with other organisations. A follow up workshop or meeting between the IWC, IOTC and experts working on cetaceans and bycatch is being planned, and will take place in advance of the 17th WPEB meeting in September 2021. The IWC and IOTC Secretariats are also exploring the development of a Letter of Agreement to formalise collaboration in relation to joint activities, including the proposed activities in the Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Phase 2 project.

IMO - Underwater Noise

Resolution 2018-4 on underwater anthropogenic noise was adopted at IWC67, calling on both the SC and CC to work on aspects of underwater noise and its impacts on cetaceans and their prey, as well as mitigation and management (Recommendations CO1880 and CO1881). IWC recommendations relevant to shipping noise were presented to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in 2018 and the Secretariat attended an IMO workshop on Quieting Ships in 2019 which considered ship-based noise limits and technical means of noise reduction.

It was anticipated that IWC would attend the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) 75 in early 2020 but the meeting was postponed due to COVID-19. The modified agenda of the meeting, held virtually November 2020, did not include Noise items. It is currently planned that Noise will be considered at MEPC76 in June 2021 and the IWC Secretariat has submitted a short paper outlining recent IWC work on underwater noise and highlighting desire to work with IMO on this issue.

Possible MoUs:

The Scientific Committee is asked for any comments with regards to the following three potential MOUs. These have been brought to the attention of the IWC Bureau who advised that endorsement should be sought for these MOUs at IWC68 but encouraged collaborative work to proceed in the meantime in accordance with existing Commission mandates.

CCAMLR

Scientists at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) have been in contact with the IWC Secretariat over the past couple of years to consider ways to enhance scientific collaboration. A draft work plan has been developed, based on an independent review of the two IGO scientific bodies. However, the implementation of this work plan has been delayed due to Covid-19 and the requirement to meet virtually with focused agendas. There is still a potential benefit to developing an MoU or other more formal agreement, which is under consideration. There have also been ongoing discussions between the science leads as well as the two Executive Secretaries in regard to practical ways to increase scientific collaboration.

Cooperation with Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW) of the Cartagena Convention for the Wider Caribbean

The Secretariat has continued working with counterparts in SPAW on a draft MoU to facilitate collaboration in areas of common interest in cetacean science and stewardship, particularly in small-scale coastal fisheries. Depending on response from the SPAW, the Secretariat will present the draft MoU to the Commission at IWC68. Areas of common interest and possibly collaboration include small-scale fishery bycatch, ship strikes, strandings response, entanglement response training, whale watching and swim-with programmes.

In the spirit of (this) cooperation, the Secretariat has participated in several virtual meetings of various SPAW activities, including discussions of the CARI'MAM project, funded largely by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), providing presentations of the IWC's BMI, entanglement, Whale Watching handbook and stranding initiatives, and technical meetings of SPAW-STAC in the lead up to their COP, currently planned for 21 - 30 June 2021. In addition, the Secretariat has provided advice to the development of a new SPAW Marine Mammal Action Plan, available as SC_68C_ForInfo_04rev01 and SC members are invited to give their input on this plan.

Marine Traffic

[Marine Traffic](#) provided Automatic Identification System (AIS) data from the SW Atlantic and these were used in research regarding Ship Strikes risk that will be presented in HIM at SC68C.

The Secretariat continue to work with the SC HIM Convenor to develop an MOU between IWC and Marine Traffic to provide data on shipping for scientific studies. This MoU would allow the IWC to serve as a single point for data requests in a standardised format, minimising work for the data provider. Marine Traffic, who have generously donated data for previous research are reviewing final drafts of documents that lay out the MoU and provide a framework for collaboration on projects aligned with the mission and vision of both organisations. Once the Marine Traffic leadership has cleared these draft documents, the Secretariat will take them forward to the IWC Commissioners at IWWC68 for consideration.

Convention on Biological Diversity and Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions

As a member of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions ([BLG](#)), the IWC has been invited to participate in various discussions of this group as part of the development of the [post 2020 framework](#) for biodiversity and associated targets and indicators. Several IWC Circulars highlighted this activity and opportunities for the IWC to be engaged either through the Secretariat or through national efforts. The IWC Chair, SC Vice-chair and Secretariat participated in a second ('Bern 2') workshop of the Secretariats of the Biodiversity-related Conventions which was held virtually in early 2021. The Chair of IWC and several members of the Secretariat participated in the February 2021 virtual meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice ([SBSTTA](#)) and additional meetings are planned in the run-up to the COP.

The process and preparatory meetings contributing to development of the post-2020 framework continue to be impacted by COVID 19. Key preparatory meetings are being held virtually and the venue for the CBD COP is still pending – possibly in-person in China in October 2021. Further information will be provided to IWC Contracting Governments when this timeline is clear.

The latest Zero draft of the post-2020 framework can be found [here](#).

Next steps for IWC engagement in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework

- The Secretariat will continue to engage with this process and will keep the Commission informed.
- Based on the latest version of the “Zero draft” of the post 2020 framework, the Secretariat will undertake an illustrative mapping exercise to show how this relates to IWC priorities, identify any existing IWC datasets which might be useful to monitoring progress towards the post-2020 Goals and Targets and inform ongoing input to the process. This will be distributed by Circular to the IWC community, inviting any comments and notifying our intentions to continue to engage in this process.
- When engaging in this process, the Secretariat will continue to highlight issues most directly relevant to healthy cetacean populations. These include key threats to cetaceans and any opportunities for these to be addressed or strengthened in the framework and promoting opportunities to address these threats including through increased cooperation, capacity building, engagement of key sectors (e.g. shipping and fisheries) and data management and reporting. We will highlight opportunities for IWC scientific information to support monitoring of progress in achieving the new framework of targets.
- IW68 would bring an opportunity for the Commission to welcome the Post 2020 Framework for Biodiversity and to make any observations on the role of the IWC in delivering relevant objectives in the framework. The Secretariat will draw this opportunity to the attention of the Contracting Governments nearer the time but proposes that the development of any proposals to the Commission should be led by contracting governments.

COMHAFAT/ATLAFCO

The Secretariat maintains regular communication with [COMHAFAT](#) as a means to ensure effective outreach and increased engagement of the IWC member countries in Africa. COMHAFAT served as host for the Chair's Regional Meetings in December 2020 and March 2021. These were opportunities to update the Commissioners in Africa on intersessional activities of the IWC, encourage engagement in the WG-OE process for the governance review, and join on-line meetings of the Scientific and Conservation communities. COMHAFAT have proposed a possible collaborative capacity building project for consideration by the SC. This is addressed in paper SC/68C/ASI/09.

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP)

SPREP hosted the Chair's IWC Regional Meeting in the Pacific Islands in April 2021. As with COMHAFAT, this was an opportunity to update the Commissioners in the Pacific Islands region on intersessional activities of the IWC, encourage engagement in the WG-OE process for the governance review, and join on-line meetings of the Scientific and Conservation communities. At this Chair's Regional meeting it was noted that in August 2021 there will be a meeting of signatories to the CMS MoU on the Conservation of Pacific Islands Cetaceans and Their Habitats. As many SPREP members are also members of IWC, SPREP is exploring the opportunity for a member of the IWC Secretariat to join this meeting.

The IWC Secretariat has held a number of meetings with the SPREP Secretariat in relation to work areas of common interest and overlap, including bycatch and whale watching. The IWC BMI is proposing possible collaboration with SPREP and other regional organisations on the ABNJ Bycatch concept proposed under the Common Oceans Programme (see FAO section above). SPREP is currently involved in an EU-funded project through its Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP), which includes a multi-taxa bycatch component focused on coastal fisheries. The SPREP Secretariat is also actively engaged in raising awareness on cetacean bycatch in the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC).

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and its daughter agreements

The Secretariat has continued ongoing co-operation with the CMS and its daughter agreements ASCOBANS and ACCOBAMS on a wide range of common challenges, including bycatch, strandings, CMPs, ship strikes, ecosystem functioning and whale watching. The IWC has an MoU with the CMS and also collaborates with the daughter agreements ASOCBANS and ACCOBAMS. Each Executive Secretary has visited the headquarters offices of her counterpart to meet with staff and discuss areas of mutual interest.

Joint work has continued with CMS on the IWC Whale Watching Handbook (particularly translations) and preparations for and participation in the SC workshop on Ecosystem Functioning (which met pre-SC68C). IWC Expert Panels for strandings, entanglement and bycatch provided input to Guidelines for the safe and humane handling and release of bycaught small cetaceans from fishing gear which have been published as a CMS Technical Series (see IWC Circular IWC.ALL.382).

There is a strong, long-standing collaboration between the IWC and ACCOBAMS on many issues including matters related to population assessment, ship strikes, bycatch, whale watching, noise, chemical pollution and CMPs. The need to continue and improve co-operation has continually been underscored and opportunities for further collaboration were recently discussed in a virtual meeting between the IWC and ACCOBAMS Secretariats.

The Secretariat provided input to the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee (October 2019), where the IWC was represented by other members of the IWC community and participated virtually in the 9TH ASCOBANS MOP in September 2020. This highlighted a number of opportunities for collaboration between IWC and ASCOBANS which will be pursued in coming months. In December the Head of

Science, Conservation and Management attended the second meeting of the ASCOBANS common dolphin group.

The IWC Secretariat has also participated in the first meeting of Joint Bycatch Working Group of ACCOBAMS and ASCOBANS, which was held in February 2021. The Bycatch Coordinator is a member of this working group.

CITES

The Secretariat continues to engage with CITES on several issues including the development of a procedure for transboundary transport of diagnostic specimens for cetacean disease investigations in emergency situations.

IUCN

There is a long-standing collaboration between IUCN and the IWC on matters of mutual interest. In recent years these have focussed on the Western Gray Whale Advisory Committee (WGWAP) and the newly formed IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force (MMPATF). The Secretariat Head of Science, Conservation and Management and the Executive Secretary joined the on-line meetings of the WGWAP in November 2020 which marked the penultimate year of the programme. The panel were presented with recommendations from the IWC Scientific Committee and a report from the Russia Gray Whale Project part funded by the IWC.

The IUCN Global Species Programme has contacted the Secretariat to offer an opportunity to review the 'GSAP Action Table' which contains the CBD Post-2020 Targets (1-20). Each target has an indicative set of draft actions and the goal is to support and complement the implementation of the post-2020 framework. As staff time allows, the Secretariat will strive to provide comments on this document and is requesting SC members to express their interest in joining in this effort.

NAMMCO

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its annual Commission meeting virtually 22-25 March 2021. Several members of the IWC Secretariat attended sessions of the meeting. NAMMCO and the IWC share common scientific and programmatic areas of work including cetacean surveys, stock assessments, bycatch and entanglement response.

PICES

The Biological Oceanography Committee of the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (BIO-PICES) held its annual meeting online in September. The IWC were invited as observers and the Head of Science, Conservation and Management gave a presentation about the work of the IWC.