

Bureau Summary Report

**Bureau Meeting
Tuesday 6 July 2021
Virtual Meeting**

15h00 to 17h00 UK time

Attendance:

Bureau Members:

Andrej Bibic	(Chair, Slovenia)
Amadou Televiel Diallo	(Vice-Chair, Guinea)
Miguel Iniguez	(Argentina)
Holger Martinsen	(Argentina)
Horace Walters	(St Lucia)
Branka Tavzes	(Slovenia)
Cat Bell	(CC Vice-Chair, WGOE Co-Chair, UK)
James Smith	(United Kingdom)
Tom Gleason	(United States)
Mi Ae Kim	(United States)
Lisa Phelps	(WGOE Co-Chair, United States)

Invited Participants:

Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho	(CC Chair)
Robert Suydam	(SC Outgoing Chair)
Alex Zerbini	(SC Incoming Chair)
Lindsay Porter	(SC Vice-Chair)

Fernando Teixeira	(Interpreter)
-------------------	---------------

Secretariat:

Rebecca Lent	(Executive Secretary)
Katie Penfold	(Head of Finance and Administration)
Moussa Ki Sow	(Secretariat)
Iain Staniland	(Head of Science, Conservation and Mgt)
Vanessa Steen	(Secretariat)

Apologies:

Emmanuel Mantey Mensah	(Ghana)
Ryan Wulff	(F&A Chair, United States)

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed participants to the virtual meeting, with a special welcome to the new Commissioner from the United Kingdom and to the new Vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee. The Chair reminded participants that the Bureau meeting was convened in line with Rule of Procedure B.4. The Chair also noted the Bureau's gratitude to COMHAFAT for providing simultaneous translation for this Bureau meeting.

2. Adoption of (Bureau) agenda, adoption of minutes of previous Bureau meeting, and designation of rapporteur

The draft Bureau agenda was adopted with the addition of agenda item 3(d) to discuss the proposed Bridge Budget for 2022.

The Bureau agreed to the minutes of the previous meeting held virtually on 14 January 2021. The minutes can be accessed via the following link:

<https://archive.iwc.int/?r=18939&k=cc4411f19e>

It was agreed that as usual, the Secretariat would serve as rapporteur for this Bureau meeting.

3. Plans for 2021 Virtual Special Meeting (VSM) of the Commission

(a) Review of comments received on the draft 100-day agenda and modifications to the agenda

A draft agenda for the Virtual Special Meeting (VSM) of the Commission was sent via Circular on 28 May 2021 and comments were requested by 28 June 2021. The Chair noted that the only suggested changes to the draft VSM agenda were from the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scientific and Conservation Committees, who requested that the Commission review and consider two matters:

- 1) Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for River Dolphins, which has been approved by both the SC and CC.
- 2) The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the joint CC/SC working group.

These topics were added to the VSM agenda to be circulated 60 days prior to the meeting.

The Bureau discussed the time slots that will be established for the VSM. Given the need for equity for all participants in a global organisation such as the IWC, these hours will be different each day, as follows:

- Day 1 - Wednesday 8 September 2021- **18h00-21h00 (UK)**: Private Commissioners Meeting (Commissioners + 1 additional person)
- Day 2 - Thursday 9 September 2021 - **15h00 – 18h00 (UK)**: Budget matters
- Day 3 - Friday 10 September 2021 - **08h00 – 11h00 (UK)**: Information on important matters from IWC subsidiary bodies

Concerns were raised regarding safety for those participating in late night meetings, which the Bureau believes may be at least partially addressed by providing support through the Voluntary Assistance Funding (see agenda item 3c). The Bureau advised the Chair that the time slots proposed for each day of the VSM were appropriate and so these are added to the Annotated Provisional Agenda for the VSM.

(b) Review of draft Guidance and comments received for virtual meetings of the Commission

The Chair noted that no revisions to the Guidance were suggested during the review following their circulation to the Commission, so these will be posted to the VSM website documents as drafted.

The Bureau discussed the issues surrounding quorum and credentials, as laid out in the Guidance for the VSM. The Secretariat noted that for any decision making at the VSM, the current number of countries with voting rights stands at 47 out of 88 member countries.

(c) Discussion on use of Voluntary Assistance Funds for enhancing access to and engagement in virtual meetings

The Chair reminded Bureau members that the Voluntary Assistance Fund (VAF) was established to enhance participation by Commissioners from Group 1 and 2 countries¹ and that with a virtual meeting format, there could be challenges in ensuring a reliable internet connection. It is therefore proposed that IWC open a round of applications for funding to support participation in the VSM in September 2021. These funds could be used to secure access to a business centre or similar for the 3 hours of the meeting each day. As needed, funding can also be provided for lodging and meals in order to stay onsite during the VSM meeting and minimize travel and associated risks, especially for late-night sessions. As required, eligible governments would be those in Capacity to Pay Groups 1 and 2 which are also non-EU/OECD members and not in arrears of contributions. Normally applications must be submitted 90 days before the meeting is held, but this is an extraordinary event, and that timeline is unachievable. The Bureau supported a revised timeline for VAF applications to reflect the unusual situation:

- Circular calling for applications as soon as possible following the Bureau meeting.
- Eligible governments submit itemised requests for funding to the Secretariat no later than 26 July 2021.
- Responses to applications to be sent no later than 2 August 2021.
- Payment to successful applicants will be made in arrears on production of appropriate financial paperwork.

The Bureau discussed the ongoing difficulties of some countries to pay contributions in light of the pandemic, and that this could continue into the next year. The Bureau noted that this could restrict the ability of some Commissioners to avail themselves of this offer of support from the VAF. This could in turn reduce participation unless these countries are able to independently secure internet connections. The Bureau noted that in order to create this exemption to the rule, even if temporarily, the Commission would need to take a vote on the change to the Rules of Procedure, and that this is beyond the mandate of the Bureau. The Chair noted the seriousness of the situation and encouraged countries to consider possible alternatives to enhancing participation of as many IWC member countries as possible.

(d) Discussion of draft Bridge Budget for 2022

The Secretariat presented a draft bridge budget for 2022, which assumes no increase in contributions and a 'business as usual' model when budgeting for expenditure. The budget will be balanced in 2022 by rolling forward savings from 2020 and 2021 (primarily due to cancelled meetings), however these savings are one-off and will not resolve the ongoing problems with the Commission's finances.

¹ See Summary of the 2021 Financial Contributions Calculation for Group 1 and 2 countries, [Tables 1 and 2](#)

The Bureau was advised that timely payment of contributions is essential for the Commission to be able to meet its financial obligations. Collection rates of core financial contributions have been even lower than usual, likely due to the lack of in-person meetings and the economic impacts of COVID-19. The 2021 provision for bad debt is expected to increase substantially if the situation does not improve.

The Bureau advised the Chair to present this draft bridge budget for 2022 to the VSM agenda along with the financial statements from previous years.

4. Other matters

(a) Updates from the Committees and Working Group

Budgetary Sub-Committee (BSC): The Secretariat provided an update on the outcomes of the Budgetary Sub Committee's small budget discussion group on behalf of Paula Perrett (Australia), Chair of BSC. The Chair and the Bureau expressed their appreciation for this work and asked the Secretariat to have the summary document translated into Spanish.

Scientific Committee (SC): The Bureau Chair expressed gratitude to the SC leadership for the successful virtual SC meeting. The outgoing (Suydam) and incoming (Zerbini) SC Chairs and Vice-Chair (Porter) noted their thanks to the SC Convenors and to the Secretariat for their support in holding a record-breaking meeting in which much progress was made on all but the most technical topics. The SC wishes to share its workplan for the coming year with the Commission and asked whether a draft agenda for SC68D might be presented to the VSM. This agenda, along with the SC budget to be adopted within the 2022 Bridge budget, updates the Commission on the SC work over the next year. The Bureau found this to be a good suggestion for addition to the VSM agenda as a 'For Info' item and would reflect Commission guidance from past years' meetings.

The Chair and the Bureau thanked Dr Robert Suydam for his service of excellent leadership of the Scientific Committee over the past six years.

Conservation Committee (CC): The Chair of the CC noted that a one-year extension to the CC workplan is underway, as was done last year, which is work already reviewed and approved by the Commission. The meeting of the CC Planning Group is scheduled for mid-October 2021. The CC leadership – Chair, Vice-Chair and Standing Working Group Chairs – are able to continue their positions until IWC68.

Working Group on Operational Effectiveness (WGOE): The Co-Chairs of WGOE noted the upcoming meeting (13-14 July 2021) of the WG and underscored that simultaneous translation will be provided to enhance participation. Following that meeting, the Co-Chairs will provide a summary document which will be available for the VSM. The Chair thanked the WGOE Co-Chairs for their work and encouraged Bureau members and others to join the meeting on 13-14 July 2021, particularly given the availability of simultaneous translation.

Documents for the VSM: The Chair noted that documents for decisions would be posted by Friday 9 July 2021 to meet the 60-day deadline. The 'For Info' documents will be submitted as soon as possible thereafter. The Bureau requested that the Secretariat contact the Chairs of the various subsidiary bodies to suggest a date by which these documents should be provided for posting on the meeting website.

(b) Secretariat updates

The Secretariat provided the Bureau with updates on the pandemic and the sale of the Red House. The IWC Secretariat continues to work at home and will review the situation once restrictions have been lifted by the UK government. The UK government is placing the onus on individuals and organisations to take appropriate safety precautions. The Red House is on the market so working

from home facilitates viewings that are underway. The Secretariat is managing personnel transitions due to retirement and new career opportunities. The staff reorganization plan (endorsed by the Bureau in October 2019) progresses per the updated chart on the IWC website (<https://iwc.int/secretariat>). A number of draft agreements (MoUs, LoAs, Lol, etc) still await Commission adoption (at IWC68) however the Secretariat continues to work collaboratively with these organisations pending formal approval ([IOTC](#), [GGGI](#), COMHAFAT, MarineTraffic, SPAW and ACCOBAMS).

The meeting was adjourned at 17h00 (UK)