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**Update on Cooperation with other Organisations**

**IWC Secretariat**



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# **Update on Cooperation with other Organisations**

## **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 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 IWC's Bycatch Coordinator was directly engaged in the development of these Guidelines. 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.

The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) is planning to meet 5-9 September of 2022. The RSN will meet one day prior and one day following the COFI meetings. The IWC Secretariat will be represented

at these meetings as part of the mandate to address monitoring and mitigation of cetacean bycatch in active and ghost fishing gear.

The IWC Secretariat has contracted with the FAO to prepare Fact Sheets that support the implementation of the marine mammal bycatch guidelines. These will be prepared in 2022, including a review by the Bycatch Expert Panel. The work will be carried out via a sub-contract with the former IWC Bycatch Coordinator.

### **Regional Fishery Management Organisations (RFMOs) and Common Oceans Project**

Working in collaboration with RFMOs, SPREP and other partners, the BMI 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 capsule (sub-project) 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, fisheries managers and observers in cetacean bycatch mitigation, monitoring, 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 for 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.

Following the final approval of the GEF, the Common Oceans ABNJ project is due to begin in June 2022 and final arrangements are underway. The Secretariat is working with the FAO administrators on a Letter of Agreement that will formalize the four-year programme with the IWC. The Secretariat is working with partners to develop detailed activities of the project.

### **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 IWC Scientific Committee (Recommendation SC1878 and SC2095 and SC20106) and by the IWC 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 has included work on an ecological risk assessment for cetaceans across the region in collaboration with other organisations in their program of work for the coming years, however this has still been assigned a low priority by the group and therefore funding has not yet been assigned to this work. A follow up workshop or meeting between the IWC, IOTC and experts working on cetaceans and bycatch was held in late July 2021 and the collaboration was also discussed at the 17th WPEB meeting in September 2021. The WPEB recommended that the collaboration and any formal agreement be submitted to the Scientific Committee before it is presented to the Commission. The IWC and IOTC Secretariats have drafted a Letter of Intent to formalise collaboration in relation to joint activities, including the proposed activities in the Common Oceans ABNJ Tuna Phase 2 project. This LoI will be addressed at the IOTC Commission meeting planned for 16-20 May 2022. The IWC will be invited to

intervene at the Commission meeting under this agenda item. The LoI will also be addressed at the next IWC Bureau meeting and at IWC68, depending up on the recommendations of the IOTC.

### **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. Underwater Noise was considered at MEPC76 in June 2021 and the IWC Secretariat submitted a short paper outlining recent IWC work on underwater noise and highlighted the desire to work with IMO on this issue.

In particular, the IWC could contribute to the proposed outputs of raising awareness related to the available scientific evidence on the impacts of underwater vessel noise on marine ecosystems, and to the evaluation of measures to further prevent and reduce underwater radiated noise in terms of the expected benefits to cetaceans. The paper also highlighted connections between reducing underwater noise and ship strike risk associated with slower vessel speeds.

At MEPC 76 in 2021, the IMO agreed to review the 2014 Guidelines and identify next steps. This was addressed in the Ship Design and Construction Sub-Committee (SDC 8) in January 2022 and IWC contributed a short paper (SDC 8/14/5). An outcome from this meeting was the establishment of a correspondence group (CG) to work on updating the IMO noise guidelines and identification of next steps. The Convenor of HIM, Chair of the CC Anthropogenic Underwater Noise ICG and Secretariat are on the CG and have begun reaching out to SC and CC Noise group members for input on the areas we can contribute to most effectively. The work plan envisages that recommendations for the next steps to be undertaken to establish international solutions for the reduction of underwater noise could be submitted to SDC9 in January and the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80) in 2023.

### **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. The Secretariat has organized and hosted several recent BLG virtual meetings and provided interventions on behalf of the BLG at a number of events.

The Secretariat seeks to raise awareness with the CBD and other relevant organisations of the scientific and conservation programmes of IWC that are already underway in order to ensure that this work is made available for as broad a range of needs as possible. Given the significant investments made through the SC scientific budget and a range of programmes supported by voluntary funds, ensuring the proper dissemination and use of this information is fundamental to ensuring healthy cetacean stocks, particularly for those threats whose mitigation is not under the purview of IWC. Sharing IWC's outcomes also helps avoid duplication in an era of ever-shrinking budgets and ensures maximum impact of IWC's products. Along these lines in November 2021 the Secretariat contributed comments and text to the CBD Technical Series on Anthropogenic Underwater Noise.

The Secretariat has compiled the information on potential elements of the post-2020 CBD process in terms of indicators and programmes. These include for example the IWC compilation of population estimates and status as provided on the IWC website, the SC and CC work on the BMI, ship strikes,

underwater noise, pollution, and other programmes. The IWC Secretariat also notes the key role of IWC in working with ASW countries to establish whaling quotas.

The Chair of IWC and several members of the Secretariat have participated in various virtual meetings of the CBD, including its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and Post-2020 preparatory meetings in the fall of 2021. The Chair of IWC and the Executive Secretary of IWC attended the series of in-person meetings held at the UN facilities in Geneva in May 2022. Additional preparatory meetings are planned both in-person and virtually and the venue for the CBD COP is still likely to be an in-person event in China in fall 2022. 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](#).

The Secretariat continues to engage with this process based primarily on how the IWC's ongoing scientific and stewardship work can contribute to tracking and reaching the Post-2020 goals and targets. The IWC Secretariat is also exploring the possibility of working with the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership ([BIP](#)) to facilitate this coordination with the overall CBD 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. These efforts will highlight opportunities for IWC scientific information to support monitoring of progress in achieving the new framework of targets. IWC68 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.

## UN

The IWC Secretariat provided comments on the draft Ministerial Statement and virtually attended the Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution on 1-2 September 2021. The meeting was an informal consultation addressing the mandates of UNEA 3/7 and 4/6 towards the 5th UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA-5.2). The webinar on 21 October 2021 presenting the From Pollution to Solution: A Global Assessment of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution report was also attended by the IWC. In relation to this the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) held the GPML Action Track 5 and Digital Platform phase 3 release webinar on 17 February 2022 which the Secretariat also attended.

## 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 COMHAFAT members to join the Virtual Special Meeting of the Commission in September 2021. The Secretariat continues to collaborate with COMHAFAT for regular updates for 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 hosted a call with the Secretariat to encourage and enhance engagement of African countries in the provision of National Progress Reports. Finally, note that at SC68C, there was agreement by the SC to establish an intersessional working group to pursue the design and implementation of capacity building workshops in West Africa focused on at-sea surveys and abundance estimation for cetaceans in the waters off West Africa (SC/68C/ASI/09). A steering Group was established and charged with follow-up work.

## **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). Both the CC and SC WW groups have provided input to the CMS Guidelines for in-water interactions with wildlife in February 2022, The Secretariat is waiting to see the revised document. 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. Members of the Secretariat joined the 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ACCOBAMS Scientific Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> November. The shared interests and strong collaboration between the two committees was apparent throughout the discussions and in the subsequent report. The former Bycatch Coordinator was a member of this Working Group and it is hoped the new Coordinator will be able to continue in this position.

ASCOBANS held a virtual meeting on 23 September 2021 to discuss the potential for a global strandings database. In addition to IWC, ACCOBAMS and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – also known as the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) were in attendance. It was agreed upon that a platform should be developed that gathers data from multiple sources and visualizes the data in one location for increased data access. The scale and size of this proposed platform should be discussed in a workshop. IWC is awaiting final details regarding this workshop.

## **Pelagos Sanctuary**

The Pelagos Sanctuary held the 8th Meeting of the Parties of the Pelagos Agreement on 15-16 December 2021 and the Ship Strikes Workshop on 17 December 2021. The IWC was invited as virtual observers for both.

## **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. In addition, following recommendations made by the SC in 2021 (SC21193-194) the Secretariat is working with CITES to investigate several cases of capture and trade of live animals.

## **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 2021 which marked the final 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 continue to 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 was invited as observers and the Executive Secretary gave a presentation about the work of the IWC.

## **ICES**

Discussion had been underway with the Bycatch Coordinator regarding the Working Group on Bycatch (WGBYC) and this is now becoming broader to look at "reviewing selected aspects of marine mammal-fishery interactions and assembling data and qualitative information available from other sources not fully covered by WGBYC (notably strandings) on marine mammals". This was building on the possible value of a common database for strandings information as a way to avoid countries sending information on strandings and diagnosed bycatches separately to multiple organisations. The IWC Secretariat will continue to discuss options with a number of organisations that have similar interest in development of this shared data platform.

## **Other**

Ocean Governance Project (<https://marine-mammals.info/the-ocean-governance-project/>)

IWC has provided input to the information pages on the Marine Mammal Twinning website and factsheets on topics of mutual interest. This includes suggestions for additional factsheets and how IWC can provide advice. The Secretariat has been invited to participate in their upcoming Workshop (May

2022) to present the outcomes of the CC workshop on Socio-Economic Values of the Contribution of Cetaceans to the Ecosystem Functioning. Discussion have begun regarding possible development of a Letter of Agreement to become a partner in this project.

### **Progress of 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 regarding opportunities to enhance scientific collaboration through the Scientific Committee of CCAMLR. 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 was discussion of this plan at the recent meeting of CCAMLR's Scientific Committee and plans are underway for Executive Secretary follow-up correspondence to encourage consideration at the respective Commission meetings. This may include the possible development of an MoU or other formal agreement. There have also been ongoing discussions between the science leads as well as the two Executive Secretaries (including an in-person meeting in February 2022 at the Red House) 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. A revised version of the draft MoU has just been received from the SPAW and this will be followed up with a concrete Work Plan for the next year or two. The Secretariat will present the draft MoU to the Bureau and then to the Commission at IWC68 if it is ready by then.

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 technical meetings of SPAW-STAC (Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee) and their COP. In addition, members of the Secretariat have continued to engage with stranding, entanglement and research initiatives in the Region. The CARI'MAM project hosted the Marine Mammal Stranding Workshop virtually on 17 November 2021. IWC Secretariat was invited to participate in the workshop and the Ship Strikes and Strandings Data Manager provided a brief overview on the scoping for a global strandings database.

### **Marine Traffic**

The Secretariat continue to work with the SC HIM Convenor to request AIS data as needed for scientific research. The plan to develop an MoU between IWC and Marine Traffic has been set aside for now, however the provision of data on shipping for scientific studies is still possible, for which the IWC is most grateful. An MoU would allow the IWC to serve as a single point for data requests in a standardised format, minimising work for the data provider. Should it eventually be possible to prepare a draft MoU, the IWC Secretariat will take them forward to the IWC Commissioners at IWC68 for consideration.